BRABANT & EAST FLANDERS

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BRABANT AND EAST FLANDERS



BRUSSELS

THE Hôtel de Ville, a corner of the Grande Place, showing La Maison des Brasseurs, La Maison du Cygne, and La Maison de l'Étoile.

BRABANT AND EAST FLANDERS · PAINTED BY AMEDÉE FORESTIER TEXT BY GEORGE W. T. OMOND · PUBLISHED BY A. & C. BLACK · SOHO SQUARE · LONDON · W.



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GHENT

EAST FLANDERS AND BRABANT

CHAPTER I

GHENT

From Bruges, the capital of West Flanders, to Ghent, the capital of East Flanders, it is only half an hour's journey by rail; but the contrast between them is remarkable. Bruges is a city of the dead, of still life, of stagnant waters, of mouldering walls and melancholy streets, long since fallen from its high estate into utter decay. Ghent, on the other hand, is active, bustling, prosperous. The narrow lanes and gloomy courts of mediæval times have, in many parts, been swept away to make room for broad, well-lighted streets and squares, through which electric trams, crowded with busy people, run incessantly all day long. Bruges is known as 'La Morte.' Ghent is often called 'La Ville de Flore,' from the numerous gardens and hot-houses

which supply plants to the markets of France, Germany, America, and other countries. Other branches of industry thrive. The trade in flax, linen, leather goods, engines, and lace, is large and flourishing. There are warehouses packed full of articles of commerce waiting to be sent off by canal or railway, and yards piled high with wood from North America, or bags of Portland cement from England.

Two great canals, one connecting the town with the estuary of the Scheldt near the sea, and the other leading, through Bruges, to Ostend, admit merchant vessels and huge barges to a commodious harbour, where steam cranes and all the appliances of a busy seaport are in full swing. There never is a crowd in Bruges, except during the yearly Procession of the Holy Blood; but every day in Ghent, if by chance a drawbridge over one of the canals is raised, a crowd of working people gathers to wait impatiently while some deeply-laden barge passes slowly through, and, the moment the passage is free, rushes over in haste. These are Flemings in a hurry. One never sees them in Bruges.

Ghent, then, is a modern commercial town; but, in spite of all the changes which time and progress have brought about, it is, like most of the other

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An old lace-maker.



Flemish towns, full of sights which carry us back in a moment to the distant past.

The Lys and the Scheldt, winding through Belgium from west to east, meet almost in the centre of the province of East Flanders; and at the point where they join a number of islands have been formed by numerous channels, pools, and backwaters which are connected with the two rivers. In early times, no doubt, the spot was nothing but a morass, and on one of the pieces of drier ground the first wooden houses of Ghent were erected. After that, during the course of centuries, the town spread from island to island, and as each island was occupied a bridge was built, so that by degrees between twenty and thirty islands, joined by a number of bridges, were covered with dwelling-houses and public buildings, and the whole surrounded by a wall and moat.

But long before buildings of brick or stone replaced the dark wooden houses, of which only one now remains, the people of Ghent had acquired the character of being the most intractable of all the Flemings; and when Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders, came back from the Holy Land, towards the end of the twelfth century, he erected, on the site of an old fortress which Baldwin Bras-

de-Fer had built 200 years before, a strong castle for the purpose of overawing the townsmen.

On the left bank of the Lys, which, passing through the middle of the town, threads its way close under the basements of the houses, is the Place Ste. Pharailde, with its picturesque buildings of the Middle Ages; and on the north side of this Place stand the massive remains of the old stronghold.

It is a grim, forbidding place, now known as the Château des Comtes. On three sides high black walls rise straight out of the water, and on the fourth side a deep archway leads into a large courtyard, in the middle of which is the donjon, said to date from the ninth century. There is a vast, dim banquet-hall, with an immense chimney-piece, and small windows with stone seats sunk deep in the walls, where King Edward III. of England and Queen Philippa feasted with Jacques van Artevelde in the year 1339, during the war with France. Dark, narrow staircases lead from story to story within the thickness of the walls, or wind up through turrets pierced with small windows a few inches square. Far down in the foundations are dismal oubliettes and torture-chambers; and in one corner of what is supposed to have been a

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THE Banquet Hall, Château des Comtes.

prison is an iron-bound chest full of the skeletons of persons who suffered in the religious troubles of the sixteenth century. This gloomy place, once the abode of so much cruelty, is one of the most interesting sights in Ghent.

Charles V. was born at Ghent in the Cour des Princes, a magnificent palace, of which nothing but a single gateway now remains. John of Gaunt (or Ghent) was born here, too. Here took place the marriage of the Archduke Maximilian to Mary of Burgundy, which gave the Netherlands to the House of Austria. And here, in the Carthusian monastery in the Rue des Chartreux, in a room which is now one of the refectories, Lord Gambier, as Ambassador for George III., signed, on Christmas Eve, 1814, the articles of peace which put an end to the war between Great Britain and the United States of America.

Everywhere, however, in Flanders the chief connecting-link between the past and the present is to be found at the Hôtel de Ville, the centre of the civic life; and it would be hard to find in all the Netherlands, except at Brussels, a more splendid example of Gothic architecture than the north side of the Hôtel de Ville at Ghent.

Within, on the walls of a great hall, the Salle

des États, is a tablet in memory of the famous 'Pacification of Ghent,' signed there in 1576, when the leaders of the Dutch and Catholic Netherlands united for the purpose of securing civil and religious liberty and the downfall of the Spanish oppression. Opposite this tablet is a window, through which one steps on to a small balcony where proclamations were made of war, or peace, or royal marriages, and laws were promulgated, in olden times. In another part of the building the twelve Catholics, thirteen Liberals, and fourteen Socialists, who (1907) make up the Council of to-day, meet and debate, in a Gothic hall of the fifteenth century, with the Burgomaster in the chair. The civil marriages, which by the Belgian Constitution of 1831 must always precede the religious ceremony in church, take place in an old chapel of 1574, where there is a large picture by Wauters of Mary of Burgundy asking the burghers of Ghent to pardon one of her Ministers. Just outside the door of this Salle des Mariages a painting of the last moments of Count Egmont and Count Horn hangs in a passage, with a roof 500 years old, leading to the offices of the Tramway Company. Thus the everyday business of the town is conducted in the midst of the memorials of the past.

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Béguinage de Mont St. Amand.



In front of the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville there used to be a wide, open space, in which the burghers assembled; but now the ground is occupied by a row of houses (the Rue Haut-Port), intersected by narrow streets, one of which leads to the Marché de Vendredi, the scene of the greatest events in the history of Ghent. This is a large square, surrounded by a double row of trees, in the middle of which is a statue of Jacques van Artevelde, the 'Brewer of Ghent,' who stands with arm upraised, pointing to the west, as if to show his fellow-citizens that help was coming from England, or that the enemy was on the march from France.

Not far from the Hôtel de Ville the compact tower of St. Nicholas rises above the housetops; and the churches of St. Pierre, St. Michael, and St. Jacques are worth a visit. There is also the Béguinage de Ste. Élisabeth, a group of houses of dark red brick with tiled roofs, trim grass paddocks, and winding streets, clustering round a church—the quietest spot in Ghent, where five or six hundred Beguines, in their blue robes and white head-dresses, spend their days in making lace or attending the services of the Catholic Church. But the antiquary and student of history will find more to interest him if he makes his way to the

Abbey of St. Bavon (birthplace of John of Gaunt), the ruins of which lie on the east side of the town, near the Porte d'Anvers.

The tradition is that this abbey was founded, early in the seventh century, by St. Amandus, the 'Apostle of Flanders,' and enlarged, some twenty years later, by St. Bavon. In the middle of the ninth century it was almost entirely destroyed by the Normans, but rose once more at a later period, only to be demolished by Charles V., who erected a castle there about the year 1540. A quarter of a century later, on September 23, 1567, Egmont and Horn were brought here by the orders of Alva, and kept in prison until they were carried, 'guarded by two companies of infantry and one of cavalry,' to Brussels, where the execution took place, in the Grande Place, on June 5, 1568.

When the Congress of Ghent assembled in 1576, the castle was occupied by a Spanish garrison, who refused to capitulate. It was accordingly besieged by William of Orange, and 'the deliberations of the Congress were opened under the incessant roar of cannon.' The siege ended, by the surrender of the Spaniards, on the very day on which the sittings of the Congress were finished by the conclusion of the treaty known as the 'Pacification,' which was

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THE Arrière Faucille (Achter Sikkel).



signed at Ghent on November 9, 1576. 'The Pacification, as soon as published, was received with a shout of joy. Proclaimed in the market-place of every city and village, it was ratified, not by votes, but by hymns of thanksgiving, by triumphal music, by thundering of cannon, and by the blaze of beacons throughout the Netherlands.'* The Castle, a monument of the Spanish tyranny, was pulled down; but many fragments still remain of the ancient Abbey of St. Bavon.

In the first quarter of the fifteenth century Hubert van Eyck and his brother Jan were living at Ghent. Here Hubert began to paint the celebrated altarpiece, 'The Adoration of the Immaculate Lamb,' which his brother finished after his death. This great painting, having survived the greed of Philip II., the fanaticism of the Puritan iconoclasts, and the rapacity of the French revolutionary army, now hangs in the Cathedral of St. Bavon; and every year hundreds of travellers visit Ghent in order to see what is, beyond doubt, the finest production of the Early Flemish School. In the choir, too, of the Cathedral are four huge candlesticks of copper, which were originally made as ornaments for the grave of Henry VIII. at

* Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part iv., chap. v.

Windsor, but were sold during the Commonwealth.

In 1500 the infant who afterwards became the Emperor Charles V. was carried from the Cour des Princes to the Cathedral. 'His baptism,' we read in local history, 'was celebrated with right royal pomp in the Church of St. Bavon. Great rejoicings signalized the event. The fountains lavishly sent up streams of purple wine from their fantastic jets, "mysteries" and mummeries, masks and merry-makings, usurped for a time the place of commerce and earnest speculation. The brave and steady citizens of Ghent ran riot from the house, and never was Venice herself more wild in the days of her maddest carnival. We are told that a magic gallery, 200 feet long, which was maintained during this temporary jubilee in a state of sufficient security to insure the safety of the thousands who thronged it, was erected at a giddy height across the streets, connecting the tower of the great Belfry with that of the Church of St. Nicholas. This was, for three consecutive nights, profusely illuminated, and threw a brilliant glow over the gay scene, in which all Ghent was revelling below.'

In the time of Charles V., Ghent was not only the most powerful city in the rich Netherlands, but

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The ruins of the cloisters of the Abbey of St. Bavon.



one of the most opulent in all Europe. And what the Belfry, whose chimes ring out with such sweet melody by night and day, was to Bruges, that was to the more warlike men of Ghent the 'iron tongue' of Roland, the mighty bell which hung in the lofty watch-tower. It called them to arms. It sent them forth to battle. It welcomed them home victorious, or bade them meet and defend their privileges in the market-place. 'It seemed, as it were, a living historical personage, endowed with the human powers and passions which it had so long directed and inflamed.'

The Belfry of Ghent, black with age, still towers above the Cloth Hall. But when, in 1540, the Emperor went there for the purpose of humbling the town, and punishing the burghers for their disobedience, he made a decree that Roland, whose voice had so often given the signal for revolt, should be taken down. No greater insult could have been offered to the proud city.

Bruges fell into the decay from which she has never yet recovered chiefly because, at a time when the whole commerce of Flanders and Brabant was beginning to languish, she lost her communications with the sea; and Ypres was ruined by years of internal discord and constant war. But Ghent, the

third of the three 'Bonnes Villes' of Flanders, though the industrial depression which spread over the Netherlands and the long struggle against Spain combined to ruin her, has come triumphant through all vicissitudes. In the old days the men of Ghent were famous for their turbulent spirit and love of independence. It was no easy task to rule them, as Counts of Flanders, or Dukes of Burgundy, or Kings of Spain often found to their cost. And now it seems as if the robust character of the burghers who fought so hard, in mediæval times, to maintain their liberties, had been merely turned into another channel, and transmitted to their descendants in the shape of that keen activity in commerce which makes this town so prosperous at the present day.

THE DUKES OF BRABANT— THE JOYEUSE ENTRÉE—END OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER II

THE DUKES OF BRABANT—THE JOYEUSE ENTRÉE—END OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

A few miles to the south-west of Alost, on the borders of East Flanders, the River Dendre, on its way to join the Scheldt, forms the boundary of Brabant. From Denderleeuw, the frontier station, to Brussels is about fifteen miles by train, through a district which gradually loses the bare flatness of the plains of Flanders, and becomes wooded, undulating, and hilly as we approach the city.

And Brussels is quite different from the fallen towns of Flanders. There are no mouldering ramparts here, and very few uneven causeways, but broad boulevards, shaded by trees; handsome modern houses; wooden pavements in some parts; a Bourse; arcades and bazaars; tempting shops, their windows decked with Parisian art; theatres and music-halls; glittering restaurants and expensive hotels. It is all modern, spacious, full of movement. While Bruges and Ypres live chiefly

in the past, Brussels lives chiefly in the present and the future. But in the middle of the city is the famous Grande Place; and the tall houses, so gloriously picturesque with pointed gables and gilded cornices; and the exquisite Hôtel de Ville with its curiously carved façade and steep roof pierced by innumerable little windows, above which the graceful spire, that 'miracle of needlework in stone,' has towered for 500 years. Here, as everywhere in the Netherlands, the traditions of the past are imperishable; and we may look back and see how this bright, gay, pleasant city—the 'petit Paris,' as its people love to call it—rose and grew.

Old Brabant extended from beyond Tournai on the west to what is now the Dutch frontier beyond Turnhout on the east, and from the neighbourhood of Ghent nearly to Liége. Just north of the forest of Soignies a ridge of undulating hills overlooked the little River Senne, which wound along eastwards through sandbanks and brushwood. On an island in this stream, according to tradition, a chapel was built by St. Gery, Bishop of Cambrai; a watch-tower, afterwards named the Tower of St. Nicholas, was erected on a hillock near the island; wooden houses, with thatched roofs, began

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Place de Brouckére.



to appear on the banks and here and there on the steep hillside up which pathways, afterwards to become streets, clambered towards a promontory called the Coudenberg, or Cold Mountain ; a market was established ; and the village became known as Bruxelles, or (at least so it is said) 'the house in the swamp,' from *bruc*, swamp, and *celle*, house.

From a long time, in the early tales about Brabant, there are the usual legends of warriors and saints ; but when we reach the period of authentic history there are four chief towns, Louvain, Brussels, Antwerp, and Bois-le-Duc. Of these the most important was Louvain. In 1190 the Counts of Louvain became Dukes of Brabant. They built a castle on the Coudenberg, and for the next 300 years the Court of Brabant was celebrated for its power and splendour.

Lying in the midst of a fertile district, and on the trade-route from Flanders to Germany, Brussels was a convenient stopping-place for travellers. But in the Middle Ages, when Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, and other places were so prosperous, the history of Brussels is less eventful ; and it was only when the famous Flemish cities were about to fall that the town on the Senne became an important centre of industry. Its population, too, increased rapidly,

owing to the numbers of workmen who came from Louvain in consequence of commercial troubles there.

So trade flourished, and Brussels grew rich ; but the continual wars which desolated France, the chief market for the manufactures of the Netherlands, did harm to the linen trade, which suffered also from the keen competition of English merchants. The raw material came from England, and by prohibiting the exportation of wool England was able to wellnigh ruin this branch of the trade of Flanders and Brabant. Fortunately, however, for Brussels, the introduction of new industries at this critical time made the damage to the linen trade less fatal, and with the growth of flax-weaving, the art of tapestry-making, dye-works, and the production of valuable armour, the town more than held its own.

Luxury and display followed, as usual, in the train of wealth, and Brussels became a city of pleasure, of fêtes, and gorgeous festivals. The Court of Brabant was one of the most luxurious and dissolute in Europe. The Dukes set an example of extravagance which was followed by the Barons who surrounded them, and also by the rich bourgeois. 'The people alone,' we are told,

'that is to say, the men without leisure, the artisans, remained apart from excesses.' There was luxury in dress, in armour, in furniture. The rich went about clad in gold brocades and other costly stuffs, attended by servants in fine liveries. Their horses were richly caparisoned, and their wives and daughters spent large sums on magnificent robes, and decked themselves with jewels, and garlands from the rose-gardens for which Brussels was already famous.

Every occasion for a fête was eagerly welcomed. Not only was there the yearly 'Ommegang,' that time-honoured procession through the streets of triumphal cars, bands of music, and giants, which delighted the people of Brabant and Flanders, but each separate guild and confraternity had its own festival. In private life every event—a birth, a baptism, a marriage, or a death—was an excuse for spending money on display. To such an extent, indeed, was this carried, that rules were made forbidding invitations being sent except to near relatives, to prevent people going to fêtes without being asked, and at length even to put some limit on the value of the presents which it was customary to give to guests. The licentious and wasteful habits of the *jeunesse dorée* became so notorious,

that there was a lock-up at each of the city gates for the benefit of young men who were living too fast. In such a state of society the money-lender saw his chance; but a law was passed making it illegal for anyone to sign a promissory note, or anticipate his inheritance, before reaching the age of twenty-eight. Brussels was full of taverns, and there were parts of the town where every house was occupied by women of easy virtue. Fortunes were recklessly squandered, and most of the nobles are said to have been insolvent, and to have left heavy debts behind them.

Not a vestige remains of the wall which surrounded this mediæval Brussels except the Porte de Hal, at the corner where the modern Boulevard de Waterloo meets the Boulevard du Midi; and the Hôtel de Ville and the guild-houses in the Grande Place have undergone many changes since the fourteenth century. A great part of the Church of Ste. Gudule, however—the choir and transept, part of the nave, and the south aisle—was built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; and during that period Notre Dame de la Chapelle and Notre Dame du Sablon rose on the foundations of more ancient churches. The houses, even of the rich, were still of wood, with sometimes a

tower of stone, built irregularly on the hillside which rose from the valley of the Senne, each house standing by itself, with its thatched roof, from which in winter the rain or melted snow poured (there were, of course, no gutters then), and found its way down to the lower ground, which was thus little better than a swamp, even long after Brussels had become an important city. It was in the midst of this mixture of discomfort and luxury, so characteristic of the Middle Ages, that the people of Brussels, and of Brabant generally, passed their lives—gay, joyous, dissolute, but always with an eye to the main chance, and growing richer and richer. And in one thing Brabant differed greatly from Flanders. While in Flanders the towns were generally at deadly feud with each other—Bruges fighting with Ghent, and Ghent at enmity with Ypres, with each town divided into hostile factions, such as the Leliarts and Clauwerts, within its own walls, the people of Brabant seem to have lived at peace with each other, and, as a rule, to have made it their first business always to combine for the defence of their common interests. And in the middle of the fourteenth century came a time which called for mutual reliance.

The last Duke of Brabant in the male line of the

House of Louvain was Jean III. He died in 1355, leaving no heir male; and thus the succession fell to his daughter Jeanne,* who had married Wencelas, brother of Charles IV. of Luxembourg.

From time immemorial the rulers of Brabant, on succeeding to the throne, had taken an oath to maintain the liberty of their subjects; and many charters confirming ancient rights and privileges had been drawn up for the towns and communes. Before recognising the Duchess Jeanne and her husband, the towns of Brabant addressed to them a series of demands, which they requested the new rulers to accept. These took the form of a charter enumerating and confirming all the points which constituted public liberty in Brabant; and this charter received the name of the Joyeuse Entrée (or Blyde Incompste), because it was hailed with such applause by the representatives of the people. The inauguration of the Duchess Jeanne and Wencelas took place at Louvain on January 3, 1356, when they swore to maintain all the ancient privileges of the country. Thereafter the act of inauguration of each ruler of Brabant was known as his Joyeuse Entrée, and each Joyeuse Entrée was a development of acts declaring public rights

* Born at Brussels, June 24, 1322.

which had previously existed, just as Magna Charta was founded on the older liberties of England. Each Duke had his Joyeuse Entrée, which he accepted sometimes with as little goodwill as King John felt at Runnymede. Thus, this famous constitution, the best known and the most liberal of all the free charters in the Netherlands, was not a parchment drawn up at one time, but a declaration of public rights which gradually developed.*

'The inauguration of a Duke of Brabant was a splendid and imposing ceremony. The Prince, who was lord of the noble Duchy, went to make himself known to his subjects, and to confirm the relations which secured both his and their happiness. He arrived, with his courtiers, at the ancient capital of Brabant, Louvain. As he descended the Brussels road he saw from afar the cradle of his ancestors, with its steeples, towers, and majestic walls, in the rich valley of the Dyle. Before entering, the heir of the old Counts of Louvain stopped for a little at the gates of the city, in the Monastery

* The text of the Joyeuse Entrée of Jeanne and Wencelas is given by Abbé Nameche, vol. iv., pp. 671-679, and the latest form which it took will be found in Poullet's *Histoire de la Joyeuse Entrée de Brabant*, pp. 339-350.

of Terbanck, where, in the midst of an immense crowd, the clergy, the officers of the University, and the magistrates, came to greet him. The brilliant assemblage then went into the chapel, where the Abbess of Terbanck, at the altar, took the crucifix and gave it to the highest dignitary of the Church who was present, and he, approaching the Duke, gave it him to kiss. The Rector of the University made an oration in the name of the University and the clergy. The Mayor placed in the Duke's hands the red staff of justice, emblem of his office. The Burgomaster gave him the keys of the city; and the Pensionary of Louvain welcomed him on behalf of all the local magistrates. Then the procession, to the sound of trumpets, went forth on horseback through the gates, the Duke and his Councillors, the States of Brabant, and the magistrates of Louvain, to the Church of St. Pierre, where they all dismounted and entered the choir; and there, after prayers had been said, the Prince swore to maintain the liberties and privileges of the Church in Brabant. Thence they went to the market-place, which was between the church and the Hôtel de Ville. The Duke took his stand on a platform with the representatives of the people of Brabant, and the Chancellor announced that he

was about to swear his Joyeuse Entrée. The Act of Inauguration was read, first in Flemish and then in French, and the Duke repeated it word for word, and took an oath to the barons, nobles, towns, and franchises of the Duchy, that he would be their good and loyal seigneur, and that he would not treat them otherwise than justly, and in accordance with all their rights. They clothed the Duke in a robe of crimson trimmed with ermine, and put the ducal coronet of Brabant upon his head. The States swore fidelity to him. The trumpets sounded. The air was filled with acclamations; and the heralds' voices crying, "Long live the Duke of Brabant!" told the Duchy that another ruler had taken possession of his heritage in accordance with ancient custom.'*

The 'States' of Brabant grew out of the primitive method of government by an assembly of the people in the market-place, where each vassal voted in person. Later, chosen representatives alone voted; and at the end of the fourteenth century the clergy began to attend as a separate order in the assembly. The name of 'États' was not used in Brabant till 1421, when the nobles, clergy, and commons called themselves the States

* Poullet, p. 3.

of Brabant.* Side by side with the States grew up the Council of Brabant, which was originally a consulting body, a judicial council to assist the Duke in administering the law, but which gradually came to concern itself with the management of local affairs, while the States conducted the public business of the duchy.

Soon after the inauguration of Jeanne and Wencelas, the jealous and ambitious Louis of Maele, Count of Flanders, who had married Jeanne's sister Marguerite, made war upon Brabant, and the struggle continued for years. Wencelas, whom Froissart describes as a wise and gallant man, was at last quite worn out by the troubles which beset him. He spent the winter and summer of 1382-1383 at Brussels with his wife, and tried to forget his sorrows in hunting, and in a round of balls and tournaments. But his health was ruined, and, having gone to breathe his native

* 'Mais bientôt les intérêts communs formèrent des Associations particulières dans le seins même de l'assemblée. Les nobles étaient unis par le droit de la féodalité ; au treizième et au quatorzième siècle, les villes Brabançonnes conclurent entre elles des traités d'alliance, et de là l'origine des ordres. On sentit alors l'inconvénient du vote individuel, et l'on admit que les individualités particulières seraient liées par la majorité des suffrages dans le même ordre' : (Poullet, p. 45).

air in Luxembourg, he died there on December 3, 1383.

The Duchess Jeanne, who survived her husband for thirteen years, years of constant trouble, died on December 1, 1406, at the age of eighty, after a reign of fifty years, and was buried in the old church of the Carmelites at Brussels. On her death the duchy of Brabant passed, by a family arrangement, to the House of Burgundy.*

Under the House of Burgundy, during the fifteenth century Brussels became more than ever a city of pomp, gaiety, and pleasure. For nearly half a century of this period the history of Brabant is full of the names of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold. Philip lived generally at Brussels, and this brought to the town so many Frenchmen that French became the language of the Court and the fashionable tongue amongst the noblesse. The old castle or palace of the Dukes of Brabant on the

* Wencelas and Jeanne had no children. Jeanne made a will leaving the Duchy of Brabant to her niece Marguerite (daughter of Louis of Maele and her sister), who had married Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. Philip the Bold and Marguerite of Maele had two sons—Jean, who became Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders on the death of his father; and Antoine, who became Duke of Brabant on the death of his mother.

Coudenberg was enlarged, and beautified by the addition of the Great Hall, where the Knights of the Golden Fleece, whose Order Philip founded, used to hold their Chapters, and which in later days was to witness the imposing spectacle of the abdication of Charles V. The boundaries of the park were extended, walls were built round it, and it was stocked with game. Bishops and nobles built themselves great mansions. The first stone of the magnificent Hôtel de Ville had been carved at the beginning of the century, and in 1444 Charles the Bold, then only ten years old, laid the foundations of the lofty spire, on the summit of which ten years later was placed that gilded statue of St. Michael which is there to this day. The Burgundian Library still remains, with its wealth of illuminated manuscripts and rare books; and the paintings of Roger van der Weyden and his cotemporaries show how art flourished at Brussels in the fifteenth century.

Unlike Philip, Charles the Bold detested the people of Brussels. His father, he said, had increased their riches and their pride beyond measure. He attacked the States of Brabant, and threatened to pull down the walls and gates of Brussels. And when, after sweeping like a tempest

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ENTRANCE to the old church of the Carmelites.



over Europe, he died before the walls of Nancy in 1477, and the male line of the House of Burgundy came to an end, it was seen that the wide domain over which his family had reigned so proudly, and which he left to his daughter Marie, was torn by internal dissensions, and that the people of Brabant and Flanders were smarting under the inroads which had been made upon their ancient privileges.

The Duchess Marie succeeded to a splendid inheritance, but her position was full of difficulty. Her treasury was empty. She had no army at her command. Popular discontent was growing. Her father had made the haughty burghers of Ghent bow before him, but as soon as he was dead they rose again. Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, all Brabant, were seething with disaffection. Payment of the taxes was refused and the officers of the Government were ill-treated. And, moreover, Hannibal was at the gates, in the person of Louis XI., who had rejoiced on hearing of the fate of Charles the Bold. The inauguration of Marie took place at the end of May, 1477, five months after her father's death; and her Joyeuse Entrée not only renewed the public rights which Philip and Charles had infringed,

but placed fresh restrictions on the power of the future rulers of Brabant.

The marriage of the young Duchess to some husband who could defend her rights was seen to be the only means of preserving the peace of the country. Her distrust of Louis XI. led her to refuse an alliance with a French Prince. She chose the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, and thus the fortunes of Brabant and Flanders were united with the fortunes of the House of Hapsburg, and the opportunity of peacefully absorbing Belgium was lost to France.

The marriage was celebrated in August, 1477. Five years later Marie died, leaving a son—the boy, then four years of age, who was afterwards known as Philip the Fair. He in turn married Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain; and the offspring of this marriage was the Great Emperor Charles V., during whose reign the capital of Brabant was more brilliant than ever.

No story is better known than the story of how in the evil days, when Philip II. ruled the 'Spanish Netherlands' in the interests of the Church, Brédérode and his friends, hearing of Berlaimont's scornful words, assumed the name of 'Beggars,' by which their party was afterwards known. But

how typical it is! How full their doings are of the gay spirit of Brabant! It is springtime, fresh and bright, when the confederate nobles leave the mansion of Count Kuilemburg,* a brilliant company of handsome, hot-blooded men of fashion and high birth, bearded all, and dressed in the elaborate finery of that time, and walk to the palace, where Margaret of Parma awaits them. They pass along the roadway which crowns the ridge, overlooking the multitude of pointed roofs below them to the left, with the spire of the Hôtel de Ville rising from where an opening among the housetops marks the situation of the Grande Place, where so many of them are afterwards to lay down their lives. The majestic towers of Ste. Gudule stand out above the houses which cluster round them on the plateau of St. Michael. In front of them is the palace, and beyond it the green glades and pleasure-grounds of the park. A crowd of people, who have climbed up from the lower town by the long steep way known as La Chausée and the Montagne de la Cour, greet them with cheers at the entrance of the palace. The doors of that magnificent dwelling receive the glittering band, who go with gay insouciance to their momentous

* In what is now the Rue des Petits Carmes.

interview, and come out from it in the same spirit. They walk about the streets, and pass Berlaimont, who is talking to Arenberg. 'Look at our fine beggars!' says Berlaimont. 'How they ruffle it before us!' They sup at Kuilemburg's. Bréderode repeats Berlaimont's jest against them. They take it up. They toast 'The Beggars.' They dress themselves up as beggars, with leathern wallets and wooden bowls. They laugh, and spill their wine about, drain more bumpers to the Beggars' health, dance on the tables, and shout 'Vivent les Gueux!'* Not even the grave face of Orange, who comes in, can stop the revel. And next day they lay aside their fine clothes, dress themselves, their families, and their servants as beggars, shave off their beards, and go about with wallets and bowls.

This was the spirit of the masquerade, of the carnival, the Kermesse; and thirty years later, when for a whole generation the country had suffered unexampled miseries, and most of the beggars of 1566 had perished by a violent death,

* 'Then for the first time, from the lips of those reckless nobles, rose the famous cry, which was so often to ring over land and sea, amid blazing cities, on blood-stained decks, through the smoke and carnage of many a stricken field.'—Motley: *Rise of the Dutch Republic.*

the arrival of the Archduke Ernest as Governor of Brabant was made the occasion for a grotesque display—'a stately procession of knights and burghers in historical and mythological costumes, followed by ships, dromedaries, elephants, whales, giants, dragons.' A strange people. The Dutch had fought with all the courage of the Nervii, and gained their freedom. The Belgians, descendants of the Nervii, had been slaughtered, defeated, tortured, and made slaves, had seen their country laid waste, and their cherished liberties taken from them wholesale; and yet, when all was lost and the heel of the oppressor was planted firmly on their necks, they were made happy by a circus procession.

THE BOMBARDMENT OF 1695 — THE GRANDE PLACE—CHURCH OF STE. GUDULE—CHARLES OF LORRAINE

CHAPTER III

THE BOMBARDMENT OF 1695—THE GRANDE PLACE —CHURCH OF STE. GUDULE—CHARLES OF LORRAINE

The sixteenth century closes with the cession by Philip II. of the Spanish Netherlands to his daughter Isabella, as a dowry on her marriage to the Archduke Albert of Austria. The King died on September 13, 1598, and a year later the Infanta and her husband entered Brabant. When they rode through Brussels in the state procession, the Infanta's saddle was studded with diamonds and rubies to the value of 200,000 florins. The magistrates presented them with a magnificent service of silver plate. There were fêtes, fireworks, and illuminations, which lasted for three days. On a medal struck to commemorate this occasion, we see them seated in a triumphal chair, surrounded by sunbeams, and with olive branches in their hands. The condition of the country was deplorable, but the evils of the time seemed all forgotten

in the midst of a round of festivities. The private virtues of Isabella and her husband made them popular, but, needless to say, Belgium was the battle-field of Europe during most of the seventeenth century.

These almost incessant wars culminated, so far as Brussels was concerned, in the bombardment of August, 1695. For twenty years the city had been menaced with destruction. It is said that Antoinette Bourignon, a noted adventuress and soothsayer, who died in 1681, had foretold that the capital of Brabant would perish by fire, and this was remembered when, in the summer of 1695, Villeroi, failing to relieve Namur, which William III. was then besieging, marched on Brussels with an army 70,000 strong.

In the first week of August it became known that an immense store of bombs had been prepared at Mons, and that Villeroi was at Enghien. The French left that place on the 10th, and next day encamped at Anderlecht, close to Brussels. Preparations were made for defence. The Guilds furnished men; the avenues between the Porte de Namur and the Porte de Hal were fortified; and the low-lying grounds were inundated. But the French came nearer; and on the 13th Villeroi sent

in a message saying that the Most Christian King had ordered him to bombard the town in retaliation for the way in which the English and Dutch fleets had treated the seaports of France ; that, as vengeance was repugnant to the goodness of his master, he had been commanded to say that if the allies would in future refrain from such modes of warfare, he would do the same by them, and retire from before the city if, within six hours, he received a definite answer of such a nature that he could accept it.

On receiving this ultimatum, the magistrates asked for time to communicate with the Elector and the King of England. An hour and a half was granted, but as no answer had been sent when that time expired, some bombs were thrown, and one man was killed on the Montagne de la Cour. Presently a message arrived from the Elector asking for a delay of twenty-four hours, so that he might send for the opinion of King William. Villeroi's reply was to commence the bombardment at once, and forthwith bomb-shells and red-hot shot came pouring on the town.

The cannonade began at seven in the evening, and continued all night and during part of next morning. The whole city was in wild confusion,

the people flying for refuge, as their dwellings took fire. There was a strong wind blowing from the west, and the flames spread from one house to another along the narrow streets, especially in the centre of the town, which was soon blazing like a vast furnace. It is said that nearly 4,000 houses were burned to the ground, and many damaged beyond repair. In the Grande Place, the Hôtel de Ville, the Brodhuis, and other old buildings were almost totally destroyed. The Church of St. Nicholas, the tower of which was the belfry of Brussels, sank in ruins. Many sick persons perished in burning hospitals. Convents and churches were shattered, and their ornaments, paintings, and archives disappeared. The old church of the Carmelites was entirely destroyed, and of the tomb of Jeanne, the last Duchess of Brabant, who was buried in the choir, not a trace remained. When the work of destruction was finished, and the French retired, it was seen that a great part of the city was lying in ruins.

Before the bombardment, the Hôtel de Ville was nearly in its original condition ; but now the west side was demolished by the bomb-shells, the roof had been consumed by the flames, and the whole building, with the exception of the spire and

the west front, was almost entirely destroyed. So that the Hôtel de Ville of Brussels, as we see it now, is, except the spire and the façade towards the Grande Place, much changed from what it was previously to 1695.* So are the guild-houses—l'Étoile, the first house next to the Hôtel de Ville, looking from the Grande Place, in the fourteenth century the headquarters of the Amman, or head of the trades, and once a tavern surrounded by a garden; Le Cygne, next to l'Étoile, which had been rebuilt in 1523 with a façade of wood; the Maison des Brasseurs, in the seventeenth century the guild-house of the brewers, and now a café, surmounted by a modern statue of Charles of Lorraine. These houses, and many more, suffered from the French shot, and had to be practically rebuilt.

The most interesting building in the Grande Place, with the exception of the Hôtel de Ville, is that in the north-east corner, opposite the Hôtel de Ville. It is now called the 'Maison du Roi,' but is known to history as the 'Brodhuis,' because a list of the current prices for bread used to be put

* There is an engraving showing the ruins of the Grande Place in 1695 in Wauters' *Histoire de la Ville de Bruxelles*, vol. ii., p. 132.

up there, when it was a *dépendance* of the Hôtel de Ville. It was so much damaged by the bombardment that it had to be entirely pulled down, but was rebuilt exactly on the original place in every detail. It was in the original Brodhuis that Egmont and Horn were imprisoned, and led forth to execution in the Grande Place on June 5, 1568. The large chamber on the third story, now the Communal Museum, is on the site of the room in which Egmont passed his last night, and is exactly the same, except that the present roof is higher. So well was the restoration of this beautiful building done, that no great effort of imagination is needed to picture the last scenes of that dismal tragedy.

Nothing remains of the first Church of Ste. Gudule, which is said to have stood on the spot now occupied by the nave, and to have been erected there early in the eleventh century, on the site of a still older church. The present building dates from the thirteenth century. It suffered at the hands of the Reformers during the religious troubles of the sixteenth century, having been sacked and pillaged on June 6, 1579. The clergy had the foresight to carry away most of their treasures before the storm burst ; but many tombs and monuments were ruthlessly destroyed. The vault of the Dukes of

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The Cathedral of Ste. Gudule.



Brabant was violated ; but in 1585, after the return of the Spaniards, the remains which had been torn from their coffins and scattered about were collected and placed in a large wooden chest. In May, 1834, when the vault was opened for the burial of the Prince Royal, son of Leopold I., and brother of the present King of the Belgians, a number of bones were found lying on the ground—the bones of the Dukes and Princes of the lordly House of Brabant, the chest which contained them having mouldered away.

During the French occupation, Ste. Gudule, which had passed uninjured through Villeroi's bombardment, was closed for two years, from 1798 to 1800, and there was a proposal to pull it down to make way for a theatre.

By that time, however, Brussels had several theatres ; and of these the best known was the Théâtre de la Monnaie. Until the works of the great French dramatists were introduced, the only spectacles of the nature of stage-plays known in Brussels were long, dull pieces in the form generally of mystery plays. For instance, in the sixteenth century they acted, at the Convent of the Carmelites, the ' Tragedy of the Passion.' In this piece, which was in three acts, there was a

chorus of children dressed as angels. News was brought to the wife of Malchus that St. Peter had cut off her husband's ear, on which the angels sang:

'Quand Pierrot coupit
À Malchus l'oreille
Le Seigneur lui dit;
Turelututu renguaine, renguaine,
Turelututu renguaine, renguaine ton coutiau,
Dans son fouriau.'

It was a great change from monkish doggerel like this to the French dramas, which, after being first played privately at the houses of some of the nobility, soon reached the general public, and created the demand for a theatre. In 1698 the old Mint House, which stood in the Place de la Monnaie, at that time a narrow thoroughfare blocked up by wooden buildings, was bought by an architect, Jean Paul Bombarda. He obtained leave to erect a 'Hôtel des Spectacles,' and was granted a monopoly of playing operas and comedies, and giving balls, for thirty years from January, 1705. But one manager after another failed, and it seemed as if the theatre must close its doors, when the actors themselves formed in 1766 a company on the model of the Comédie Française, which afterwards received a subsidy from the city.

From that time the fortunes of the Théâtre de la Monnaie, now so well known, began to mend. The present building dates from 1817.

It was during the peaceable reign of Maria Theresa—peaceable, at least, so far as the soil of Belgium was concerned—that the theatre became so popular in Brussels. Brabant was then free from the troubles which had so often interfered with progress in more important things than the stage; and the people of the capital were kept in good-humour by the popularity of Duke Charles of Lorraine, who became Governor of the Austrian Netherlands in 1741.

In March, 1744, he came to live permanently in Brussels, accompanied by his wife, the Archduchess Marie, sister of Maria Theresa. They entered by the Allée Verte, then and for a long time after the fashionable promenade of Brussels. A battalion of the English Horse Guards was drawn up on the meadows at the side of the avenue. The Duke reviewed these troops; and then the cavalcade started along that green way from the Palace of Laeken, which so many joyful bands have trodden. The Horse Guards led the procession. Then came Charles of Lorraine in a carriage, followed by Ministers of State, and the lords and gentlemen of

the Court, attended by some squadrons of English cavalry. At the Porte de Laeken, the burgomaster, kneeling reverently, presented the keys of the city in a silver basin. Thence they went through the streets to the Hôtel de Ville, and up the Rue de la Montagne to the Church of Ste. Gudule, where they were received by the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines and his clergy, who said mass. In the evening every street and square in Brussels blazed with illuminations.

That day was the beginning of a long period of gaiety for the pleasure-loving city. No ruler could have suited the people of Brussels better than Charles of Lorraine. The annals of his time are full of merrymaking, the accounts of which enable us, perhaps better than graver histories do, to understand the Court of the Austrian Netherlands in the long reign of Maria Theresa.

In February, 1752, we find the Duke giving a 'Venetian Fête' in the palace of the Duc d'Arenberg, at which all the gay people in Brussels were present. There were four quadrilles, the first consisting of eight ladies and gentlemen dressed as gardeners, the second of pilgrims, the third and fourth of peasants and sailors. A masked supper followed the dancing, and at midnight all

the company, still in their masks, drove in open carriages through the streets. The coachmen were masked, as were the grooms who rode beside each carriage with torches, and so were the musicians who played before and after them on their way to the Théâtre de la Monnaie, where they danced and feasted and gambled till morning.

Charles of Lorraine lived generally at the château of Tervueren, where he spent large sums on stocking the woods and lakes with game and fish. 'What I must put in my park at Tervueren,' he notes in his private diary—'8 roe bucks, 150 hares, 100 pheasants, 4 wood cocks, 6 grey hens, 10 Guinea fowls, 50 partridges, 20 red partridges, 100 wild ducks. Of fish—600 tortoises, 300 crabs, 200 trout, 100 sturgeons.'

Every day he jotted down in his diary all his doings, all his petty cash payments, what the members of his Court did, and even the names of their mistresses. The Duc d'Arenberg gives jewels to La Nogentelle, a danseuse at the Monnaie. The Dutch Minister is ruining himself for La Cintray, another dancer; and the English Minister has lost his head over Mademoiselle Durancy. The Prince de Ligne and M. Androuins spent much time and money in company with the

sisters Eugénie and Angélique d'Hannetaire. M. d'Hannetaire, the father of these young women, had begun life as a comedian in Brussels, and was now manager of the Monnaie. He had three daughters, who went in the *demi-monde* by the name of the Three Graces, and used their father's house as a place of assignation for gentlemen of quality. D'Hannetaire is said to have been luckier than most managers, and to have made a large fortune, much of it by the faro-table in the foyer of his theatre, where at that time heavy gambling went on every night.

Duke Charles was a great gourmet, and gave famous dinners, and, of course, makes a note of the wines. Burgundy was evidently his own favourite tipple. He drank at least a bottle at every meal; but there was Rhine wine, Champagne, Bordeaux, and Tokay for his guests, not to speak of cognac, maraschino, and other liqueurs, all of the very best. He had red partridges sent from the Tyrol; and his cash-book records '114 livres paid to an express from Venice with a barrel of tunny-fish in oil, and for another express from Hamburg with a barrel of English oysters and black mussels.' In the official calendar of this jovial Prince the names of all who worked in his kitchen

are given, from the head chef down to the turnspits. The name of the Chef Rôtisseur, curiously enough, was Rognon. The Comte de Sart held the important office of Grand Maître des Cuisines.

He was the darling of Brussels, and so much loved that in the year 1766, when he was very ill, the churches were never empty all day long, so many pious people went to pray for his recovery. When his health was restored there were all sorts of festivities: the fountains spouted wine; half the town got drunk; the Prince de Ligne had an ox roasted whole on the street in front of his mansion and given to the poor; and the first time the Duke appeared at the theatre there was so much applause that the performance was stopped, and his doctor, who was seen in a box, was cheered again and again for having cured his patient.

Three years later, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his coming to Brabant, there were fêtes which continued for days. The Hôtel de Ville, the Brodhuis, and all the Grande Place glittered with coloured lights. The Comte de Sart illuminated his house with 1,000 red and yellow lanterns. There was a great banquet in the Hôtel de Ville, where 1,400 guests, the ladies seated and the gentlemen standing, were waited on by

200 grenadiers, and a free performance at the theatre, where two glasses of punch were given to each spectator. Medals were struck to commemorate the event. The town of Brussels presented the Duke with 25,000 florins, and the States of Brabant voted him a statue and 40,000 florins.

There never was a Prince so popular or so respected in Brussels before or after him, and he had thirty-six long years of it. But the revels came to an end in July, 1780, when he died at his château at Tervueren, and was buried in the Church of Ste. Gudule, in the vault of Albert and Isabella.

Five months later the news reached Brussels that the Empress Maria Theresa had died at Vienna; and on the evening of December 23 a funeral service was held in Ste. Gudule. Mass being ended, the heralds, standing at the high altar, proclaimed the titles of the late Empress. Then one of them said in solemn tones: 'She is dead; may God have mercy on her soul.' And as the clergy intoned the *De Profundis*, sobs were heard in every corner of the dark, vast building, amidst which Toison d'Or, King-at-Arms, took up the sword of State, and, holding it high above his head, cried with a loud voice: 'Long live Joseph the Second, our Sovereign!'

JOSEPH II. AND THE REVOLUTION OF BRABANT

CHAPTER IV

JOSEPH II. AND THE REVOLUTION OF BRABANT

It was difficult to follow an Empress like Maria Theresa, or to find a successor to Charles of Lorraine in the government of the Austrian Netherlands. But if ever a Sovereign came to a throne full of good intentions it was Joseph II.; and yet, while the easy-going Charles had pleased the people of Brussels for thirty-six years, the reforming Joseph had in less than ten caused the Revolution of Brabant.

It was evident that many reforms were urgent. For a long time the spirit at least of the constitution of Brabant had suffered from the encroachment of the Imperial Government, and the country was losing its moral fibre. Nor had the peaceful and happy times of the Empress Maria Theresa rescued the people from the utter demoralization which long wars and their own submission to Spain had brought about. Every sphere of social life and every department of the Government required

to be overhauled and invigorated. Moreover, the Austrian Netherlands were as Catholic as ever. The new light of the eighteenth century had not reached the clergy, who were still groping about in mediæval darkness; and some fresh system of educating the priesthood was clearly needed. Joseph II. might thus have found his task comparatively easy if he had gone about it in the right way, and taken counsel with the representatives of the people before introducing the reforms on which he was bent. Unfortunately he took a different line, asserted his personal authority, and tried to play the double rôle of an autocrat and a reformer, with disastrous results.

The Church was speedily offended, for in November, 1782, the Emperor issued an edict granting civil liberty to the Protestants, and allowing them to build churches, to enjoy the privileges of citizenship, to take University degrees, and hold public offices. The Bishops protested against all this, but they were not listened to; and another edict allowed Protestants to open schools in any place where there were a hundred families of their religion, and to bury their dead according to their own rites. These measures of toleration were followed by a decree compelling the religious

associations to register all their property in a new office, called the Caisse de Religion. The appeal to the Pope was abolished; and the settlement of disputes connected with marriages was taken from the Bishops, who saw their judgments submitted to the approval or disapproval of the civil powers. Convents were suppressed and turned into barracks or hospitals. The Emperor did his best to alter the Catholic liturgy. He drew up a philosophical catechism of his own invention. He ordered the use of new vestments. Marriage was to be regarded as a civil contract, and divorce was to be allowed.

The most fervent adherents of the Church acknowledged that new schools for the training of young priests were needed; but the Emperor tried to set up a system of his own in defiance of the views of the clergy. The chief bone of contention on this point was the establishment of the Séminaire Générale for the education of youths who were intended for the priesthood. The University of Louvain, the old capital of Brabant, had been one of the most celebrated seats of learning in Europe; and there the new seminary was planted by an edict of October, 1786, which declared that the existing episcopal schools were to be abolished, and the clergy of the future to be

educated at the seminary of Louvain. The purpose of the Emperor, it was announced in an official proclamation, was to bring back the clergy of the Netherlands to 'primitive Christianity,' and to substitute for the monkish system of education 'enthusiasm for their native land and attachment to the Austrian Monarchy,' to destroy the 'Ultramontane Hydra,' to teach them science and philosophy, art and letters, and reveal to them the lessons and the benefits of modern thought and progress; in a word, to make them useful citizens and give them a liberal education. But the Church would have none of these things, and in the Catholic Netherlands the influence of the Church was overwhelming.

At Brussels, certainly, the people were not greatly moved by these attacks on the privileges of the clergy, nor disturbed at the prospect of having a cultured priesthood, and only began to grumble when an attempt was made to interfere with the Kermesses and national fêtes, in which they so much delighted; but the Emperor went on to irritate the States and Council of Brabant, which the citizens revered as the guardians of their liberty, and from that moment his enterprise was doomed to failure.

The States declared that the Church reforms were illegal; but the Emperor ignored their opinion. The Council declared that its privileges were invaded by the establishment of a new Court of Appeal at Brussels. And both the States and the Council protested against other changes in the system of government on which the Emperor had set his heart. The Council continued to sit in defiance of his wishes; and the States met, and refused to vote supplies until their grievances were redressed. The Joyeuse Entrée had been infringed, they said; and soon, not only in Brabant, but in every part of Belgium, people were talking about their rights.*

Brabant would not have been Brabant if some comedy had not been acted on the political stage at such a time. 'It was at this juncture,' we read, 'that there appeared upon the scene a woman who played a great rôle in the Revolution. The Dame de Bellem, called La Pinaud, after having been a lady of fashion at Brussels, began to mix herself up in political discussions with all the impetuosity

* 'On se mit à exhumer et à méditer les textes de nos anciens priviléges. Nobles, clergé, savants, femmes, gens du peuple, tout le monde parla *joyeuse-entrée*' (De Gerlache, i. 331).

of an ardent and passionate heart. Her intimate relations with the advocate Van der Noot much contributed, no doubt, to lead her into this path, where she was followed by her daughter Marianne, the Muse of this period with little poetry. Both of them helped the enemies of Austria with their pens and their influence over the numerous young men who attended their soirées; and the smiles of these two ladies, who are said to have been very pretty, doubtless gained more partisans to the Revolutionary cause than the pamphlets of the mother or the verses of the daughter.'*

Henri Nicolas Van der Noot, advocate and standing counsel for the trades before the Council of Brabant, and lover of the Dame de Bellem, was made President of a Revolutionary Committee at Brussels, and put his eloquence, which was that of a mob orator, at the service of the Bishops, who came forward as the defenders of the Constitution. In vain Joseph II. protested that he had no wish to infringe the Joyeuse Entrée. Van der Noot thundered, La Pinaud wrote, her daughter canvassed, the Bishops preached against him. A service was held in Ste. Gudule to invoke the aid of Heaven against the Séminaire Générale and all the

* Wauters, ii. 321.

new ways, and on behalf of the Joyeuse Entrée. On leaving the church, some young people put on tricolor cockades, and this badge was soon common in the streets. Things went from bad to worse, and on May 18, 1789, Brussels was on the brink of revolution.

An immense crowd filled the Grande Place, where the States were sitting in the Hôtel de Ville to consider an ultimatum which had come from Vienna, demanding supplies and the suppression of the Council of Brabant. The States refused the supplies, and directed the Council to sit *en permanence*. The Emperor's Minister, Count Trauttmansdorff, by turns implored and threatened. 'Your resistance,' he told them, 'will ruin you.' 'The Emperor,' they replied, 'may destroy us, but he cannot coerce our consciences or our honour.' Troops were then marched into the Grande Place. A squadron of dragoons were drawn up between the Brodhuis and the Hôtel de Ville, and the States were informed that the Joyeuse Entrée of Brabant was suppressed. On this the Marquis de Prud'homme d'Aillay rose, and said to the Minister: 'Since there is nothing more for us to do here, I am, sir, your very humble servant,' and left the Hôtel de Ville, followed by all the members of the States.

The news from Paris, where the clouds were gathering dark round the head of his sister Marie Antoinette, might have made Joseph II. pause; but, far away in Vienna, he made up his mind to go on as he had begun. So the Revolution of Brabant gained force, and Van der Noot was the popular idol, with all Brussels at his feet. On his return from a tour of agitation in the provinces he was received with royal honours: the Hôtel de Ville flung out its red hangings; and at the doors of Ste. Gudule he was met by the canons, who waved incense before him, and placed him on the Emperor's *prie-dieu*. He went to the Monnaie, where 'La Mort de César' was performed, and the actor who played Brutus declaimed—

> 'Sur les débris du trône et de la tyranie,
> Du Belge indépendant s'élève le génie,'

on which all the spectators rose, waving their hats and shouting 'Vive la liberté! Vive Van der Noot!' and the players crowned the demagogue with laurels, and hailed him as 'the Lafayette of Belgium.'

The Revolution seemed complete when the provincial States throughout the Austrian Netherlands proclaimed their independence, and summoned a Congress of the United States of Belgium. But

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Old houses in the Grande Place.



they needed men of sterner stuff than any who could be found in the Flanders and Brabant of that time; and the end was not long in coming. The extreme clericals, led by Van der Noot, were opposed by the followers of the advocate Vonck. Van der Noot had always relied on the hope of foreign intervention. Vonck wished the Belgians to work out their own salvation. Van der Noot and the Church party were obstinately conservative. Vonck and his party wished to see the expulsion of the Hapsburgs followed by measures of reform. The Vonckists had the worst of the quarrel, for the masses were against them, and showed their sentiments in a way which those who know Brussels will understand.* But the leaders of the other party lacked the ability to make head against the Austrian troops which marched into Brabant. The volunteer army of the Catholic Netherlands, deserted by its Prussian commander, General Schönfeldt, was disbanded; and so the Brabant Revolution came to naught.

* 'On donnait au Manneken'—the curious little statue in the Rue du Chêne—'un uniforme de volontaire, et chaque quartier de la Ville avait son arbre de la liberté chargé d'allégories patriotiques ou anti-Vonckistes' (Wauters, ii. 393).

Joseph II. died before the end, and in the midst of all his troubles. He had yielded much. The seminary at Louvain was closed, and the Joyeuse Entrée was restored. But these concessions came too late, and, on February 20, 1790, this Sovereign of good intentions passed away, while whispering in the ear of the Prince de Ligne, 'Your country has been my death.'

His brother Leopold reigned in his stead. The Austrians entered Brussels on December 2, 1790; and a week later the Ministers of Austria, Great Britain, Russia, and Holland signed the Convention of the Hague, which confirmed to the people of the Catholic Netherlands all the rights and privileges which they had enjoyed under the Empress Maria Theresa. But now the curtain was about to rise on a new scene in the history of Brabant and Flanders.

THE JACOBINS OF BRUSSELS—VISIT OF NAPOLEON—THE HUNDRED DAYS

CHAPTER V

THE JACOBINS OF BRUSSELS—VISIT OF NAPOLEON—THE HUNDRED DAYS

'C'est la Belgique,' said Danton, 'qui comblera le déficit de la Révolution.' The Convention at Paris saw in the riches of the Austrian Netherlands a means of filling its treasury, and supporting the failing credit of France; and its emissaries knew how to work upon the people of Brabant and Flanders. 'Nous avons évangélisé partout,' was the report sent to Paris by one of them, 'in the streets, in the clubs, in the drinking-shops, in the theatres. . . . We have covered the walls with placards, and made the highways resound with our hymns of liberty. We have dallied with their fanaticism, and tried to stir up the lower ranks of the clergy against the higher, and so kill priestcraft by priestcraft.'

Meantime the army of the Republic had been at work, and on the field of Fleurus Jourdan com-

pleted the conquest which Dumouriez had begun at Jemappes.

Dumouriez, who understood the character of the people he was dealing with, was all for conciliation. He did not wish to bring the Jacobins of Paris to Brussels, and raise up men like Chabot and Marat. He proclaimed that the French came as friends and brothers, and promised to secure the independence of the country. Above all things, he wanted to conciliate the Church. But most of the Revolutionists sneered at the Catholicism of the Austrian Netherlands. 'What a pity,' said Camille Desmoulins, 'that the priests spoil the Belgians so much. One cannot but wonder at the way in which these people, while wishing to preserve their liberty, try also to preserve the cowls of their monks;' and Marat, who had no patience with the moderation of Dumouriez, declared that nothing would come of the war 'till a true *sans-culotte* commands our army.' So after Fleurus the Austrian Netherlands were made part of France.

The moderate democrats of Brabant had been swamped in the early days of the French Revolution by the extreme men who corresponded with the Jacobins at Paris; and some strange scenes had taken place in the venerable Grande Place

of Brussels. A Tree of Liberty was set up there, round which men, women, and children danced the carmagnole; and a mob went up to the Place Royale chanting the '*Ça ira*' and roaring out the 'Marseillaise,' fastened ropes to the statue of Charles of Lorraine and pulled it down. And it must have been a curious sight when Dumouriez gave receptions of an evening, and artisans rubbed shoulders with men like the Duc d'Ursel and the Duc d'Arenberg, who at first, like others of the noblesse, mingled with the red-caps and joined the Jacobin clubs, which seem to have been quite the fashion.

Ridiculous things were done at the meetings of the Jacobin clubs. The advocate Charles burns his diploma, and says he wants no title but *sans-culotte*, and then goes on to propose that the names of all the squares and streets of Brussels be changed. There should, he told his friends, be Places d'Athènes, de Rome, de France, and Rues de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, de Brutus, de Voltaire, de l'Opinion, de la Philosophie, du Divorce.

One wiseacre demands that the ancient constitution of Brabant be burned on the following Sunday during the ceremony of 'The Benediction of the

Flag of the *sans-culottes*.' 'Let the bust of Van der Noot be also burned,' he added; on which another statesman rises, and exclaims: 'Je demande, moi, qu'on promène le Manneken de Van der Noot avec celui de la Pinaud, sa bonne amie.' Clearly the *sans-culotte* of Brussels was a mere tinsel imitation of the genuine article at Paris. At Paris all was tragedy; Brussels amused itself with a burlesque. But as time went on, and it dawned upon these would-be Jacobins and *sans-culottes* that the Revolution meant fighting in the armies of France, and that everything in Church and State was to be turned upside-down, they began to lose their tempers, and long before October, 1795, when the formal incorporation with France took place, they were quite tired of masquerading as Jacobins.

Five years later they were as weary of the Directory as they had been of the Convention; but when, in 1803, Napoleon came to Brussels, he was well received. There was, however, a good deal of sham enthusiasm on that occasion, and his most successful visit was in 1811, when he brought the Empress Marie Louise with him. Brussels then showed that, in spite of the Brabant Revolution, the House of Austria had a strong

hold on the affections of the citizens. 'Voilà Marie Louise d'Autriche!' was heard in the streets. The town gave fêtes in her honour; and one evening, when the Empress was at the Monnaie, and had brought with her a bouquet of tulips from Harlem, which fell over the edge of her box, gentlemen ran from all parts of the theatre and picked up the fragments, which they made into button-holes. 'L'Impératrice parut charmée de cette galanterie Bruxelloise,' says the local account of this incident.

Napoleon was at Laeken with Marie Louise when the campaign in Russia was resolved on. The story goes that on receiving the news that the Tsar refused to carry out the Continental System, he began at once to whistle the air of 'Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre,' and ran out into the grounds of the palace in such a rage that he nearly knocked the Empress down. It was at Laeken that the fatal declaration of war was signed.

As soon as the Allies entered the Netherlands after the French reverses of 1812 and 1813, they were made welcome. Between four and five o'clock on the evening of February 1, 1814, the French rearguard left Brussels; and about an hour

later the first Cossacks, a party of half a dozen, rode in by the Porte de Louvain, passed quickly through the city, and went on after the French army. These scouts were followed by a large force of cavalry and infantry. The Prussian infantry found billets, and the Cossacks lay down and slept beside their horses on the snow in the Rue des Fripiers,* the townsfolk standing near, and wondering at their strange dress and language. Soon the town was full of soldiers, some of whom remained there, while others pressed on to France.

The news that Paris had capitulated reached Brussels on March 3. The bells were rung, cannon were fired, and the houses were illuminated. Then, one after another, the towns which still held out surrendered. Carnot alone, who was in command of Antwerp, gave no sign of yielding; but in the middle of April, while the last arrangements were being made for the departure of Napoleon to Elba, he pulled down the tricolor, and the great stronghold on the Scheldt fell, with the rest of Belgium, into the hands of the Allies.

It was almost a fixed rule of international politics in Europe, when some great war was

* The street which leads from the Place de la Monnaie towards the Bourse.

finished and some treaty of peace was on the boards, that people should ask each other what was to be done next with the Catholic Netherlands. The rich inheritance of the House of Burgundy was passed from hand to hand by Austrians, Spaniards, and Frenchmen, without any statesman ever considering what might be the wishes of the inhabitants; and now, in 1814, the Great Powers, at first in secret, resolved to set up a new State, consisting of Holland and Belgium united, and call it the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with William of Orange-Nassau on the throne. He came to Brussels in July, 1814, not yet as King, for the Congress of Vienna was to settle the map of Europe and parcel out the spoils, but as Governor on behalf of the Allies; and at the end of the year his son, the Prince Royal, took command of the allied army in Belgium.

They had a gay time in Brussels during that winter of 1814-15, as everyone knows. But on March 1 the Great Man landed in France; and a fortnight later the Orange flag was hoisted in Brussels, and the new King announced that he had not intended to assume the royal authority till the work of the Congress at Vienna was finished, and all their decisions could be executed

together, but that the recent event in France had made him resolve to wait no longer.

On April 5 the Duke of Wellington came post-haste from Vienna, and went to live in a house next door to the Hôtel de France, at the corner of the Rue de la Montagne du Parc and the Rue Royale.

And now during these wonderful Hundred Days, about which so much has been written, the eyes of all Europe were fixed on Paris and Brussels. But there were some good folk living at Ghent, who considered themselves as the most important people in the world, as well they might, considering what pains were being taken, and what oceans of blood were to be shed, in order to make it safe for them to depart from East Flanders and go back again to France, whence they had lately fled in a great hurry.

Louis XVIII. was lying on a sofa at the Tuileries, suffering excruciating agonies from the gout, when a despatch was brought to him with the news that Napoleon had been in France for the last five days, and was at that moment on the road to Paris. Instantly preparations were made for flight, with as much secrecy as they had been made for that terrible trip in the *Berline*

on which another Bourbon had set out so many years before. Everything was kept quiet, and no one whom it was possible to hoodwink was trusted. On the night fixed for the departure one of the Ministers was at the palace. The King gave him no hint; but as he was leaving the captain of the guard whispered: 'We're off in an hour; the relays are ordered; meet us at Lille.' They started, and had a most uncomfortable journey. It was pouring rain. The roads were deep in mud. The royal portmanteau was stolen with all the royal wardrobe. The royal gout was most painful; and at Lille the garrison was sullen. There were tricolor badges on all sides. Eagles were pulled out of knapsacks, and the fleur-de-lis was nowhere to be seen. This was evidently no place to stay at long; and so the King crossed the frontier and made for Ghent, where he had been offered a home in the splendid mansion of the Comte d'Hane-Steenhuyse.* He remained there comfortably until after the Battle of Waterloo.

* This fine house is now No. 63, Rue des Champs, the residence of the Comte de Bouisies, who married the daughter of Madame Borluut, a direct descendant of the Comte d'Hane of 1815.

People who came to Brussels in the first week of June were surprised to find how peaceful the town was, and how gay. Everyone has read the narratives of what went on, and the story has been told over and over again, and nowhere better than in *Vanity Fair*, which is history in disguise in the chapters where Amelia invades the Low Countries. On June 14 Napoleon, having crossed the frontier, was at Charleroi, on the road to Brussels, and all Brussels was talking about the dance which the Duke and Duchess of Richmond were giving next day at their house in the Rue de la Blanchisserie, in the ballroom with the paper of 'a trellis pattern with roses.'*

It was a strange night in Brussels, that night of June 15, 1815. By eight o'clock the Duke has given orders for the troops to march at daybreak, for he knows that Napoleon has crossed the frontier. Then he goes to the ball to wait for another despatch. At eleven o'clock, when the dancing is in full swing, the message reaches him. He hastens the march by two hours, and the bugles begin to sound all over the town. 'One could hear,' says General Brialmont, 'in the ballroom the rolling of cannon and the steady tramp of the

* *Reminiscences of Lady de Ros* (Lady Georgina Lennox).

regiments marching towards the forest of Soignies.' The Duke is in bed and asleep by two o'clock; but many of his officers dance on till it is time to rush off to their regiments.

It would be useless to repeat the story of the next three days. It has been told a hundred times. The clear, refreshing dawn; the soldiers gathering from their billets; the partings; the regiments marching off, the Black Watch and the 92nd Highlanders with the bagpipes playing before them, through the park and the Place Royale, and passing away up the Rue de Namur and along the road beyond, to where the soft light of early morning is beginning to shine among the glades of Soignies; the sound of heavy firing on the 16th; the silence on the 17th, with the news that Blucher has lost the day at Ligny, and that Wellington is falling back from Quatre Bras; the carts and material of the army moving slowly up the Rue de Namur all day long; the awful suspense of the 18th, when no one can rest.

'We walked about nearly all the morning,' says Lady de Ros, 'being unable to sit still, hearing the firing, and not knowing what was happening.' About three o'clock the observant Mr. Creevy went for a stroll beyond the ramparts. 'I walked

about two miles out of the town,' he writes, 'towards the army, and a most curious, busy scene it was, with every kind of thing upon the road, the Sunday population of Brussels being all out in the suburbs of the Porte Namur, sitting about tables drinking beer and making merry, as if races or other sports were going on, instead of the great pitched battle which was then fighting.' It was an hour or so after this that the Cumberland Hussars came galloping through the Porte de Namur, down the street and across the Place Royale, shouting that the French were coming, and raised such a panic. It was not till late at night that the truth was known.

And at Ghent? They had got on there very well on the whole. The gout was troublesome, but Louis XVIII. had the enormous appetite of the Bourbons, and ate a great deal. The Comte d'Hane gave a big dinner one day, at which the King managed to consume a hundred oysters for dessert. Some of the courtiers used to go to a tavern in the suburbs and eat a small white fish, a dainty much esteemed at Ghent, which was caught in the river there. Chateaubriand, who was one of this Court in exile, was at a dinner where they sat at table from one o'clock till eight. 'They began,' he says, 'with sweets and finished with

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Rue de Namur.



cutlets. The French alone know how to dine with method.' They played whist, and went to the theatre. Catalani sang for them at concerts, and also in private to please the King. When the royal gout allowed it, the King went to Mass at the Church of St. Bavon. But during the last three days His Majesty was very nervous, and kept his carriage secretly ready for another flight.

On the 18th, Chateaubriand was taking a walk outside the town near the Brussels gate, when a courier from Alost rode up with a despatch from the Duc de Berri. 'Bonaparte,' it said, 'entered Brussels yesterday, 17 June, after a bloody battle. The battle was to begin again to-day. The Allies are said to have been completely defeated, and the order for retreat given.' All Ghent was in dismay. The Comte d'Artois arrived and confirmed the bad news. Many Belgians who had been in the French army immediately started to take service once more under Napoleon. Preparations were made for starting at once; but at one o'clock next morning a despatch came with the news of the victory. On June 22 the King left Ghent, to mount once more the throne which had been retained for him at such a cost.

The scene of the great battle is wonderfully little changed since then. The level of the ground at

the centre of the ridge occupied by the Allies has been lowered by the removal of earth to make the Mound of the Belgian Lion ; the tree under which the Duke of Wellington and his staff stood at intervals during the day is gone long since ; a tramway runs past the farm of La Haye Sainte towards Quatre Bras and Charleroi ; and a number of houses have been built on the road between Waterloo and Mont St. Jean. But the general aspect of the fields on which the fight took place remains the same. Down to the right, looking from Mont St. Jean, the château of Hougoumont, half destroyed by shot and fire, still remains as it was left after the battle, with its orchard walls and tall, dark trees. The farmhouse of La Haye Sainte, that scene of carnage, is still where it was, at the side of the road which leads down the incline, and then up from the narrow valley to La Belle Alliance, near which is now the monument of the Wounded Eagle, a memorial to the last combatants of the army which fought and lost with such matchless valour. Every yard of the ground is sacred. There is, in all the world, no spot where a Briton and a Frenchman can meet with more profound emotions of mutual respect than on the slopes near Mont St. Jean.

WATERLOO

THE farm of La Belle Alliance and the mound surmounted by the Belgian lion.



THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT—THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

CHAPTER VI

THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT—THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

One day, soon after the Battle of Waterloo, the Tsar Alexander was at La Belle Alliance with William, King of the Netherlands, and his son the Prince of Orange. He asked for a glass of wine, and drank to '*la belle alliance*, not only of nations, but of families.'

The marriage of the Grand Duchess Anna Paulowna to the Prince of Orange had just been settled; and all the Courts of Europe believed that the troublesome question of the Low Countries was at last finally solved by the union of Holland and Belgium under the dynasty of Nassau, now to be allied by marriage with one of the Great Powers which had placed it on the throne of the new Kingdom.

The English Government had arranged that the Prince of Orange, heir to the Kingdom of the

Netherlands, should marry the Princess Charlotte, heiress to the throne of England; and their engagement had been announced to the States-General at The Hague in March, 1814. But this plan had fallen through from the causes with which everyone is familiar—the objections of the Princess Charlotte, who did not wish to leave England, and liked the Prince less the more she saw of him; her fancy for the impecunious Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, whom she afterwards married; and the intrigues of the Grand Duchess of Oldenburgh to break off the match, in order to bring about a marriage between her sister, the Grand Duchess Anna Paulowna and the Prince of Orange.

The Prince was accordingly married to the Grand Duchess. His character—careless, pleasure-loving, and extravagant—made him very popular in Brussels, and he spent as much as possible of his time in his palace there, or at the château of Tervueren. He preferred the Belgians to his countrymen the Dutch, whose grave ways did not suit him. Soon after his marriage he sent a secret message to the Duke of Wellington, under whom he had served in the Peninsular War and during the Hundred Days, asking for the Duke's influence to obtain leave to fix his Court at Brussels.

Wellington refused to interfere in a domestic question, and, in reply to the Prince's suggestion that his presence in Brussels might help to check discontent amongst the Belgians, said that he doubted the statements as to Belgian disaffection, *as many persons, and even nations, were interested in breaking the union of Holland and Belgium.*

The King and Queen of the Netherlands had the greatest difficulty in persuading the Prince to visit them in Holland. The Communal Council of Brussels waited on them at The Hague with an address of congratulation on their accession. 'I don't know,' said the Queen, 'what you do to keep my son at Brussels; but he is so fond of you that we hardly ever see him here.' It would have been better for the stability of his throne if the King had spent more of his own time in Brussels, for signs of that discontent about which the Prince had written to Wellington soon began to appear, and he might, perhaps, have taken warning before it was too late, if he had known the truth.

Like Joseph II., William came to the throne full of good intentions; like him, he alienated the clergy at the outset; and, like him, he tried to give the Catholic Netherlands a liberal Constitution on his own terms. His aim was to make them free

and happy, but 'Alone I did it' must be written over all. His character was a combination of sage ideas and Dutch obstinacy; and one great root of bitterness between him and the clergy was that never-ending question of education, over which parties are fighting in Belgium at the present day. It was not that he wished to make the southern provinces Protestant. But he was bent on raising the intellectual standard of the country; and for this purpose he founded, amongst other institutions, the Collège Philosophique at Louvain, where the young priests were to receive a thorough education in accordance with the spirit of the time —a scheme which the Church resisted as it had resisted the Séminaire Générale of Joseph II., and with equal success.

In a variety of ways the King alienated the people as well as the priests. Though the States-General met alternately at The Hague and at Brussels, all the great departments of the executive were in Holland. They would, indeed, have been safest there in the event of a war; but it was made a grievance that some of them were not at Brussels, Antwerp, or Ghent. Most of the officials were Dutch, which was said to prove a wish for Hollander supremacy, though the Dutch were a minority of

the population of the United Kingdom. The press attacked the Government, and was severely punished under a system of decrees emanating from the personal authority of the King. The use of Dutch as the official language was enforced against the wishes of the majority. Dutch methods of taxation were extended to Belgium, and trouble was caused by the fact that Holland was for Free Trade and Belgium for Protection. And of course the southern provinces were Catholic and the northern Protestant, which more than anything else kept them on bad terms. At last the impression became universal that the King's policy was to sacrifice the interests of the Belgian provinces to those of Holland; and the result was that the two great parties, or schools of thought, which had always bitterly opposed each other, the Catholics and the Liberals, united to oppose the Government.* This was in 1829.

* The question of tariffs was one bond of union. At a political dinner on July 9, 1829, when the toast of the union of Catholics and Liberals was given, one of several maxims on the walls was: 'Notre industrie, agricole et manufacturière, a besoin d'un système de protection sagement pondéré; sans cette protection, le travail étranger viendrait prendre bientôt sur notre marchéla place du travail national' (C. Rodenbach: *Épisodes de la Révolution dans les Flandres*, p. 82).

Next year the Paris revolt of July, which drove out Charles X., and put Louis Philippe on the throne of France, taught the Belgians how easy it might be to get rid of a ruler with whom they were discontented; and when the news from Paris came to Brussels, the streets and cafés were full of men reading the papers, and saying to each other, 'That's the way to revolt! Long live the barricades! Long live the people!'

The days passed on in Brussels, with the restlessness of the population increasing. The King's birthday was August 24, and preparations had been made for celebrating it with unusual brilliancy. The park was to be illuminated, and there were to be fireworks at the Porte de Namur. But the people of Brussels, in that summer of 1830, were not to be pacified by fêtes. Placards were found posted on the walls with the ominous words: 'Le 23, Feu d'artifice; le 24, Illuminations; le 25, Révolution.' Warnings, too, reached the Procureur du Roi that mischief was brewing; and the festivities were abandoned, the reason being given that bad weather was expected!

On the evening of the 25th Auber's 'Muette de Portici' was to be played at the Monnaie. This opera had been more than once forbidden lest it

should cause disturbances; but now permission had been granted to perform it, and the theatre was full. Every song of revolt was cheered, and the climax came with the words of the duet in Act 4:

> 'Amour sacré de la Patrié,
> Rends-nous l'audace et la fierté?'

The audience rose and rushed out into the Place de la Monnaie, inflamed by the songs they had just heard, and shouting, 'Liberty! liberty!' Then the mob gathered and rioting began. The old flag of Brabant was hoisted on the Hôtel de Ville, and the town was in an uproar for the next two days.

Orders were sent from The Hague to put down the 'rising' by force, and Dutch troops under the command of Prince Frederick, the King's second son, marched on Brussels. For nearly a month threats, promises, negotiations were tried. But the insurgents refused to yield. Paid agitators went about among the people; men of high standing took the lead in organizing the revolt; barricades were erected; volunteers came in from all parts; the Bishops pulled the strings behind the scenes, and the country clergymen instigated their parishioners to rebellion; the whole of Flanders

and Brabant was soon up in arms, and on September 23 the Dutch advanced to attack Brussels.

Three days of desperate fighting in the streets followed. The Dutch held the park in force, but could not penetrate into the Place Royale, which was defended by a strong barricade. Every house in the Rue Royale was full of insurgents, who fired from the windows on the Dutch. In other parts of the city there was the same stubborn resistance. For three days the struggle continued. At sunset the firing ceased, and the working men in their blouses sat drinking and boasting of their exploits in the cafés, while their leaders met at the Hôtel de Ville and took counsel for the morrow, and the Dutch bivouacked in the park and on the boulevards. Each morning at dawn the tocsin sounded from Ste. Gudule, and the people rushed to the barricades.

At daybreak on September 27 all was quiet when a small party of the insurgents stole into the park, and went forward under cover of the trees. They found it empty. The night had been very dark, and in the small hours the Dutch had left in silence, and were now marching away from Brussels.

It was a day of brilliant sunshine, and while

the bourdon was sounding from the towers of Ste. Gudule, and horsemen were riding out into the country with the news, the populace flocked to the Palace. The men of the blouse, their hands and faces black with gunpowder, merchants, priests, lawyers, well-dressed ladies and ragged harridans, boys and girls, young and old, went in, pushing, laughing, singing. They did little damage, but hacked and cut the portraits of the King—the poor King who had meant so well by his kingdom. The Queen's private rooms were examined, and her wardrobes opened. One lad found a rich dress, 'a magnificent robe of ceremony—white velvet embroidered with gold.' He pulled it out, put it on, and over it a mantle of orange colour. With a hat '*a là* Marie Stuart' on his head, he sallied out. The mob, crying, 'The Queen is prisoner!' surrounded him with shouts of laughter, and then tore off the finery and trailed it in the dust. A marble bust of the King was brought out. They put a crown of Dutch cheese upon it, and carried it about with cries of 'Down with the first and last King of the Netherlands!' Many lives had been lost during the fighting; but this was Brussels. It was all very different from Paris and the downfall of Louis and Marie Antoinette.

The chief work of the Congress of Vienna was undone; and King William instructed Baron Falck, his Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, to ask for intervention on his behalf. The British Government replied that troops could not be sent; that the Five Great Powers were to meet in London; and that the policy of Great Britain would be to prevent the troubles in the Netherlands leading to a breach of the peace in Europe.

How the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia met in conclave on the weary question of the Low Countries; how this Conference of London recognized the independence of the Catholic Netherlands, defined their boundaries, and made them neutral; how at the same time a National Congress at Brussels declared that the House of Nassau had forfeited the throne, chose as the first King of independent Belgium Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, and framed, under the influence of Lamennais and his disciples, a Constitution whose democratic principles breathe the spirit of the Joyeuse Entrée of Brabant, are events which form a part of the general history of modern Europe.

THE VICISSITUDES OF ANTWERP

CHAPTER VII

THE VICISSITUDES OF ANTWERP

When Napoleon was at Antwerp in 1803, he spoke to the Communal Council about the miserable condition of the place. 'It is little better,' he said, 'than a heap of ruins. It is scarcely like a European city. I could almost have believed myself this morning in some African township. Everything needs to be made—harbours, quays, docks; and everything shall be made, for Antwerp must avail itself of the immense advantages of its central position between the North and the South, and of its magnificent and deep river.'

Antwerp was indeed a pitiable sight. Its trade had sunk to nothing. Rows of squalid houses, with wooden gables 300 years old, looked down upon canals choked up with slime and filth. The wharves on the banks of the noble River Scheldt were mere heaps of rotten timber. Half the churches, from which the stained glass and rich ornaments of former days had long since departed,

were closed. Grass was growing in the deserted streets; and the walls of this desolate city contained a population which numbered only some 40,000 souls. Such in the beginning of the nineteenth century was the state of Antwerp, which had once been the centre of European commerce and the greatest seaport in the world.

The position of Antwerp, close to the estuary of the mighty stream which brought it within reach of the markets, not only of Flanders, but of every part of the world which could be reached by water, had made it from an early period one of the chief cities of Brabant. But for a long time Bruges and Ghent, after their formidable rival Ypres had sunk into insignificance, absorbed most of the commerce of the Netherlands. These splendid cities fell; the commerce which had made them great found its way to Antwerp; and by the middle of the sixteenth century, when the waters of Zwijn, which had carried so many costly bales to Bruges, were drying up, the broad expanse of the Scheldt was covered by innumerable ships threading their way up to where the merchant princes of Italy, Germany, and England had established themselves, in a city which was now greater than even Venice or Genoa. Every week 2,000 waggons heavily

ANTWERP

The Cathedral—Chapel of St. Joseph.



laden entered Antwerp. Silk, satin, velvet, and tapestry; gold, silver, and precious stones; spices and sugar from Portugal and Spain, now enriched by their conquest of the Indies; wines from France and Germany—all found their way to Antwerp. The manufactures of the Flemish towns were sent down the highway of the Scheldt to the most distant parts of the world; but England, Spain, and Portugal were the countries to which most of the cargoes were exported, and these were so rich that on one occasion the contents of thirteen ships taken by pirates were valued at 500,000 *écus d'or*.*

Already, under the Dukes of Brabant and Burgundy, the city had grown far beyond its original limits; but the wealth, the magnificence, and the vastly increased population which the remarkable prosperity of the sixteenth century brought with it, led Charles V. to issue a decree that the walls must be extended, and the boundaries now became those which enclosed it until recent times.

The Cathedral Church of Notre Dame, still the glory of Antwerp, was the largest and the richest ecclesiastical building in the Netherlands. Not

* Moke, p. 390 (3rd edition).

far from the Cathedral was the Vleechhuis, now known as the Vieille Boucherie, a solid building of red brick relieved by courses of white stone, with five hexagonal turrets, erected by the Guild of Butchers, the interior of which was in those days ornamented with elaborate carvings, paintings, and marble statues. It is now surrounded by mean houses in the most squalid part of the town; but its massive appearance, even in decay, gives an idea of the power and wealth of what was not the most powerful nor the wealthiest of the guilds.

In the Grande Place, as in the Grande Place of Brussels, were other guild houses, distinguished by their quaint gables and towering façades, each the home of some great corporation. There, too, was the Hôtel de Ville, built of marble, and called 'the wonder of the world,' lately erected to take the place of an earlier structure which was no longer considered worthy of the Antwerp which, having dethroned her rival Bruges, was now called by her proud inhabitants the 'Queen of the North.' In all parts of this opulent city bankers and merchants —Fuggers, Greshams, Stettens, Spinolas, and many more—had built for themselves luxurious houses, and met daily at the Bourse, where more business was done than anywhere else in Europe.

ANTWERP

The Vieille Boucherie.



But within a period of ten years two events took place, the first of which destroyed the internal beauty of the Cathedral, and the second of which began the downfall of the commercial prosperity of the city.

In 1566 the yearly Ommegang was fixed for Sunday, August 18. Those who have seen the crowds which, in our own time, gather in the towns of Belgium when the streets are perambulated by the processions which still are so attractive to the people of the Catholic Netherlands, may form some conception of the intense hostility which was excited in the hearts of the Reformers by the superstitious reverence paid to the jewelled image of the Virgin, which was that day carried through the streets of Antwerp. For the Inquisition had already been at work for fifteen years, and thousands had already gone to the scaffold or perished at the stake, and no man's life was safe who did not bow the knee at the bidding of the gloomy despot who was persecuting the country in the name of the Catholic Church. The image of the Virgin, the gorgeous vestments of the priests, the ornaments of the churches, the banners of the religious societies, the incense which filled the air, nay, the very Host itself, were all so many

symbols of oppression. No wonder, then, that after the procession had returned to the Cathedral the battle-cry of 'Long live the Beggars!' was like a match applied to gunpowder, and that the fury of the common people broke out. Seventy marble altars, among them an altar of the Holy Sacrament which had been forty years in building, were destroyed. Three organs, the finest in Christendom, were shattered into splinters. The woodwork of the church, stalls, confessionals, pulpits, carved chairs, were broken up. The statues of the saints were cast down. The magnificent vessels of gold and silver, the richly embroidered robes and banners, were trampled under foot. The beautifully tinted windows were demolished. The image of the Virgin was torn to pieces. When the work of Vandalism came to an end, it was wonderful that the building itself had escaped destruction.

No blood was shed by the Protestants when they wrecked the Cathedral of Antwerp, not even that of a single priest; no woman was insulted, nor was any plunder carried away by the rioters.* But in ten years came the orgy of robbery, murder, and rape known as 'The Spanish Fury.'

* See Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part ii., chap. ii., for the evidence as to this.

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Old houses in the Rue de l'Empereur.


HORESTER

The citadel, built by Alva to overawe the town, was occupied in 1576 by a garrison of Spaniards whose pay was in arrears, and who cast longing eyes on the El Dorado lying ready to their hands. The defenders were a body of Germans and Walloons who had just come from Brussels. These were mercenaries and not to be depended on, and the burghers themselves were not so hardy as of old. On the morning of November 4 the Spaniards, reinforced by a troop of mutineers from Alost, rushed through a thick mist which hung over the marshes of the Scheldt, and burst into the city. For three long days the streets ran blood. Men, women, and children were put to the sword without mercy. Public buildings and private dwellings were plundered. The whole town was set on fire. Women were violated; there were cruel torturings; and every possible crime was committed. Many were drowned in the river while trying to escape. Piles of dead lay in the Grande Place. Of the Hôtel de Ville, where the Burgomaster and most of the magistrates met their death, nothing remained but the bare walls. The archives of the city perished in the flames. Eight thousand corpses lay among the smouldering ruins —for this massacre was more deadly than the

massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day. 'The city, which had been a world of wealth and splendour, was changed into a charnel-house, and from that time its commercial supremacy was blasted.'* Within four years of the Spanish Fury almost the whole trade of Antwerp had been transferred to Amsterdam, and the time of the final catastrophe was at hand.

The Pacification of Ghent, which bound all the provinces of the Netherlands in a league against Spain, followed hard on the Spanish Fury of Antwerp; but the northern and the southern provinces quickly drifted apart, and in three years were rent in twain. The diplomacy of the Prince of Parma was as fatal to the cause of freedom as the fires of Alva. Holland stood firm and was saved in the long, weary struggle. Belgium halted between two opinions, and was lost. Brussels, the political capital, held out until it was starved into surrender; Bruges capitulated; and most towns of note sooner or later were taken, or made their peace humbly with Spain. But to obtain possession of Antwerp was a matter of far greater importance than the fate of any other town, and the siege, which Parma conducted with so much

* Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part iv., chap. vi.

energy and skill, was the most serious military operation during the contest in the Netherlands. For Antwerp, though doomed to destruction by the Spanish Fury and sinking rapidly, was still the commercial capital of the Netherlands. 'Antwerp was the hinge on which the fate of the whole country, perhaps of all Christendom, was to turn. "If we get Antwerp," said the Spanish soldiers—so frequently that the expression passed into a proverb—"you shall go to Mass with us; if you save Antwerp, we will all go to conventicle with you." '*

The population was large, about one hundred thousand. The Hôtel de Ville, the centre of the civic life, had already been rebuilt; the city, in spite of its frightful loss of trade, had not yet abandoned all hope of recovering its position; and William the Silent, before his death in 1584, had pointed out the means of defence—to destroy the dykes which kept the Scheldt within its bed, and flood all the meadows round the city, so as to prevent the Spaniards blockading the river by erecting a bridge, which would bar the passage of the ships on which the city would—in the event of a siege—depend for supplies of food. This advice

* Motley, *History of the United Netherlands*, chap. v.

was not taken. The Guild of Butchers, whose flocks fed on the meadows which it was proposed to flood, objected, met in the Vleechhuis, and sent a deputation to the magistrates, who quailed before them. Other guilds, together with most of the citizens, refused to believe that the Scheldt could be bridged, and the magistrates decided not to follow the plan of the Prince of Orange. Parma, therefore, was able to occupy the banks of the river, and to build forts which threatened the town and protected the army of workmen who were soon busily engaged in constructing the bridge which was to close the channel. At the same time, while his own position remained dry, the dykes at some distance had been opened, and the plains for miles around were turned into a waste of shallow water.

The siege lasted for seven months. For some time food reached the city in ships which succeeded in forcing their way up from Flushing and past the Spaniards; but blockade-runners expect a big return for their risks, and when the magistrates were so foolish as to put a limit on the price of wheat, the supplies from outside came to an end. The building of the bridge went on, slowly but surely. The weather was cold and stormy. The river, in winter flood, made the task almost

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Archway under the Vieille Boucherie.



impossible; but the Spaniards toiled on with wonderful patience and courage, and at last, on February 25, 1585, their work was finished, and the Scheldt was closed. The garrison made desperate efforts by sallies, fire-ships—everything they could think of—to destroy Parma's work, but all in vain. The citizens trembled at the prospect of a famine. England and Holland were sending help; but stout hearts like those which, a century later maintained the defence of Londonderry till the boom was broken, were not to be found in Antwerp. Negotiations were opened, and, after a long time spent in discussing terms, the capitulation was signed on August 17, 1585. The terms of the surrender were not hard. An amnesty was granted, and the garrison received the honours of war; but on one point Philip was inexorable—there must be no liberty of conscience, no religion but that of Rome.

What this meant to Antwerp was soon apparent. The Reformation had many disciples there.* They

* 'Nulle part en Belgique les nouvelles croyances n'avaient jeté des racines aussi profondes' (Moke, 426). The Rue de Tournai was the quarter where most Calvinists were to be found. From the list of suspected persons, drawn up in 1567, it would appear that barely half a dozen families

were called upon to choose between giving up their religion or leaving the country. A period of two years was fixed, during which the Protestant merchants and the Protestant workmen of Antwerp, on whose business capacity and labour the prosperity of the city depended, might leave their places of business and abandon their homes; and in order that the rising generation should breathe, from their earliest days, a purely orthodox atmosphere, Parma was instructed to see that the selection of teachers was left in the hands of the Jesuits, so that no Protestants should have a voice in the education of the young. Antwerp suffered from this policy of intolerance in the same way as, exactly one hundred years afterwards, France suffered from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The flower of the population left, carrying with them what remained of their wealth and, a greater loss, their skill and habits of industry. 'The poor city is most forlorn and poverty-stricken, the heretics having all left it,' were Parma's own words.*

living there were free from the charge of heresy.—Thys: *Historique des Rues et Places Publiques de la ville d'Anvers*, p. 77.

* 'In a very few years after the subjugation of Antwerp, it

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THE Concierge of the Musée Plantin-Moretus.



The people of Antwerp might well have applied to themselves the words used by Gerard Truchses of Cologne, when lamenting the supineness of the German Princes during the death struggle against Rome and the Escurial: 'We shall find our destruction in our immoderate desire for peace.' Peace they had obtained, but a peace which brought them no relief, and left them face to face with starvation; for Sidney—that Sidney of whom tradition tells the well-known story of his cup of water given to the wounded soldier—saw to it that not one bushel of wheat was carried up the Scheldt past Flushing, which he held as Governor for the Queen of England, to what was now a Spanish town.*

For twenty-four years the Scheldt was rigorously

appeared by statistical documents that nearly all the manufactures of linen, coarse and fine cloths, serges, fustians, tapestry, gold embroidery, arras-work, silks and velvets, had been transplanted to the towns of Holland and Zeeland, which were flourishing and thriving, while the Flemish and Brabantine cities were mere dens of thieves and beggars.'—Motley: *History of the United Netherlands*, Appendix to chap. v.

* The Battle of Zutphen, at which Sir Philip Sidney received the wound from which he died, was fought on October 2, 1586, thirteen months after the surrender of Antwerp.

blocked by the fleets of Holland; and the commerce of Antwerp, which Parma would fain have restored, disappeared altogether. A gleam of hope came when, in 1609, the Twelve Years' Truce was signed at Antwerp by the representatives of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella and the States-General of Holland. But the city had fallen so low that many years would scarcely have sufficed to raise it; and whatever progress followed the truce came to an end with the Treaty of Münster. The closing of the Scheldt had become a political dogma with the Dutch; and the fourteenth article of the treaty kept it closed against the trade of Brabant and Flanders, to the great benefit of the seaports of Holland.*

About the year 1590, amongst the pupils at one of the schools established by the Jesuits at Antwerp after the great siege, was a boy whose parents had given him the Apostolic name of Peter Paul. His father was Joannes Rubens, a distinguished lawyer,

* The proper reading of Article XIV. of the Treaty of Münster was disputed. See De Gerlache, i. 70. However, 'Quoi qu'il en soit,' says Baron De Gerlache, 'l'Escant demeura fermé; les Hollandais en tenaient les deux rives; le commerce d'Anvers et de la Belgique fut ruiné par la faiblesse et la lâcheté de l'Espagne, et par la connivence égoïste des autres puissances.'

who had been a magistrate of Antwerp at the time of the image-breaking in the Cathedral, and whose name was in the list of persons suspected of Calvinism. The Burgomaster and magistrates solemnly assured the Government that he was above suspicion; but Rubens, who undoubtedly was a Calvinist, fearing the Inquisition, left the city and went to Germany with his wife. There he was involved in an intrigue with Anna, daughter of the Elector Maurice, and second wife of William the Silent. Rubens was sent to prison, and thereafter banished to Siegen, where his wife joined him. The Princess, after being kept in close confinement for some years, died in 1577. In that year, the year before the Spanish Fury, and on June 28, being the Eve of the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul, was born the boy who afterwards became the famous painter. Ten years after the birth of his son Joannes Rubens died at Cologne, and his widow, returning to Antwerp, took up her abode in the house where she had formerly lived with her husband, in the Place de Meir. There young Rubens passed his schooldays. If the cupboards were bare at Antwerp at that time, the confessionals were full, and the widow, having abjured the errors of Calvinism, sent her son to the schools

which, ever since the surrender to Parma, had been in the hands of the Catholic clergy.

When his education was finished he went to learn painting from Venius, whose studio was then in a street called the Rue Sale,* because, it is said, of its extreme dirtiness, and also from Van Noort, who taught in the Rue du Jardin. Thereafter he travelled for eight years in Italy and Spain, gaining friends and painting, always painting, and studying art. News reached him that his mother was ill, and he hurried back to Antwerp, but found on his arrival that she was already dead. Having no longer any home ties, he was on the point of returning to Italy, and Antwerp nearly lost him, when the Archdukes Albert and Isabella persuaded him to remain. This was in 1608. Next year he married Isabelle, daughter of Jean Brant, town clerk of Antwerp, and set up house in the Rue du Couvent, where many of his best-known works were painted.

He soon, however, built the mansion in which he lived for the rest of his life, in what is now called the Rue Rubens,† to the south of the Place

* Now the Rue Otto-Venius.

† Then the Rue de la Bascule, or 'Wapper,' a broad street with a canal in the middle, filling up, apparently, the space

de Meir. He drew the plans himself on the model of some palace he had known in Italy, painted frescoes on the walls, and filled it with curios he had collected during his travels. In his large garden he put up a domed 'Pantheon,' where he arranged the paintings, antique statues and busts, cameos, medals, vases of porphyry, and other treasures which his friends in Italy sent him. His studio was a vast room, from which the largest canvases were easily brought down by a staircase which one of his biographers describes as like that of a royal palace.

We know a great deal about his mode of life at Antwerp, and how he was sent journeying on diplomatic errands by the Court of Albert and Isabella to France, Spain, Holland, England, and everywhere received with honour. At home, early in the morning (he rose at four in summer), having already been to Mass, he is at work in his studio, and loves to listen as he paints to some friend who will read to him from Cicero or Plutarch, or, brush in hand, talks with endless vivacity to the guests

between the east side of the modern Rue Rubens and the west side of the modern Rue Wappers. In 1611, when Rubens built his house, the canal which used to run down the middle of the Place de Meir had been vaulted over for some time.

who have come to call on him. After a walk in his garden he dines frugally and very soberly, for he dreads, we are told by Van Hasselt, the effect of wine on his imagination; and then he works on in his studio till late in the afternoon, when he mounts one of his fine horses and rides till after sunset. In the evening he sups as frugally as he dined, and finishes the day at home in a circle of his most intimate friends, the only society for which he cared. This busy, happy life of Antwerp's greatest citizen closed on May 30, 1640. The statue in the Place Verte* was erected to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of his death; but the fruit of his laborious days is the best monument of his fame.

Close to the Place Verte is the Marché du Vendredi, where, in 1578, Christopher Plantin, 'the Rubens of the printing-press,' set up his works. The story of Plantin's life is a romance of labour. He was born at Tours in 1514, of a wealthy family called Tercelain; but, his father having lost his fortune, he changed his name to Plantin, and found employment at Caen as a bookbinder. Having married there, he went to Antwerp, and opened a small shop, in which he

* The churchyard of the Cathedral till 1784.

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The Place Verte.



worked at his own trade while his wife sold cloth. The story goes that one night during the carnival he was wounded by some masqueraders, who mistook him for another person. To hush up the affair they paid him a sum of money, with which he bought a press and types, began to print almanacs and books for children, and did this so well that he soon had a flourishing business.

The first important work produced at the Plantin Press was 'L'Instruction d'une Fille de Noble Maison,' a translation from the Italian, which appeared in 1555. His reputation grew, and in thirteen years he was able to purchase the site at the Marché du Vendredi. His name, like that of Joannes Rubens, was on the list of suspected Calvinists after the image-breaking, and his printing-house was searched. But nothing was found to support the charge of heresy, and his orthodoxy must have been established beyond doubt, for Philip not only employed him to produce the famous Polyglot Bible, but gave him the monopoly of printing missals and breviaries for the whole of the Spanish Empire.

After his death in 1589, the business, which now had branches in Paris, Leyden, and Frankfort, was carried on by his son-in-law, Jean Mourentorff,

whose family afterwards changed their name, in accordance with the pedantic fashion of the day, to Moretus. The Musée Plantin-Moretus, with the dwelling-rooms and their Renaissance furniture; the type and presses of the sixteenth century; the old proof-sheets, looking as if the printer's reader had just left them; the tapestry and paintings; and the quaint courtyard with the aged vine-tree, which traditions say was put there by Plantin himself—is the place of all others where some idea may be formed of the family life and surroundings of a wealthy business man in the Netherlands 300 years ago.

But though Rubens had painted and the firm of Plantin had printed and grown rich, the Scheldt was all the time rolling down to the sea with scarcely one sail upon it; and the shipping trade of Antwerp was still at the mercy of the Dutch when the eighteenth century came in. The Treaty of Utrecht gave the Catholic Netherlands to Austria, but did not free the Scheldt. On the contrary, the stipulations of the Treaty of Münster were confirmed; and when in 1785, a century since Parma took Antwerp, Joseph II. demanded the opening of the great river, this same Treaty of Münster was unrolled as a reply. Thus, when the

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The Musée Plantin-Moretus (the Arrière Boutique).



French Revolution came, and the army of the Republic took possession of the Austrian Netherlands, the Scheldt had been blocked and the shipping trade of Antwerp ruined for more than 200 years.

In November, 1792, the Convention declared the Scheldt a free river, and ordered its Generals to carry out this declaration by force of arms against the Dutch. Mr. Pitt was ready to remain neutral in the war between France and Austria; but to this infringement of the Treaties of Münster and Utrecht, which had given the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt to the Dutch, he would not agree. Apart from the question of treaty rights, that the coast-line from the Scheldt westwards, with Antwerp at one end and Dunkirk at the other, and from the Scheldt northwards to the Texel, should be in the hands of France suggested a constant danger of invasion; to say nothing of possible injury to the commerce of England from the restrictions which an unfriendly Power might place on English trade with Antwerp, if Antwerp, as was certain, became once more a great seaport when the Scheldt was free. England was about to recognize the Republic when this question of Holland and the Scheldt made war inevitable.

Thus once more Antwerp was the hinge on which the peace of Europe turned.

Though the Scheldt became a French river in 1797, after the Treaty of Campo Formio, and though the Convention of The Hague had already abolished the shipping dues, Antwerp had made no progress towards recovery when Napoleon went there in 1803. He deepened the harbour, strengthened the fortifications, expended immense sums on improving the communications with Amsterdam and other places in the Netherlands, and purposed making the great seaport opposite the mouth of the Thames his chief naval station. He even planned the building of a new city. England was equally aware of the value of Antwerp. The Walcheren expedition, that costly failure,* was undertaken to strike a blow at this vital spot ; and the Conference of Chatillon, in 1814, broke down because Napoleon would not relinquish Antwerp. He could not make up his mind to let it go. Long afterwards he said : ' Antwerp was to me a province

* Napoleon thought that the expedition was wisely conceived, and that, if it had not been so foolishly executed, Antwerp might have been taken by a *coup de main*. As to the tactics of the English Generals, ' C'était le comble de la bêtise et de l'inhumanité,' he said (O'Meara, *Napoleon at St. Helena*, i., 238).

in itself. It was the principal cause of my exile to St. Helena; for it was the required cession of that fortress which made me refuse the terms offered at Chatillon. If they would have left it to me, peace would have been concluded.' And it was still in his possession when the end came. Carnot was there —'iron Carnot, far-planning, imperturbable'—and held the fortress till the Emperor abdicated.

Trade revived with the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. By 1830 the population had increased to between 70,000 and 80,000. There was a strong Orange party in the city during the Belgian Revolution, for the Scheldt is to Antwerp what the Nile is to Egypt—its life; and the union with Holland insured the freedom of the river.

Antwerp, however, suffered more at that time from the Dutch than Brussels. General Chassé, an old soldier of the Empire, who had lived there for some years, was in command of the troops in the citadel.* He had under him between 2,000 and 3,000 men. The forts and ramparts were armed with nearly 300 heavy guns, and in the Scheldt,

* 'Il commandait depuis quelques années à Anvers, où ses aventures amoureuses lui avaient donné une terrible réputation. C'était une sorte de Lovelace en cheveux blancs, forte redouté des mères de famille.'—De Leutre, ii. 81.

close to the town, were nine ships of war. An exchange of shots between some of the Belgian insurgents and the Dutch was followed by a furious bombardment. For seven hours the citadel, the forts on the other side of the river, and the ships continued their fire. The houses shook with the noise of the big guns and the rattle of musketry. The terror and confusion were indescribable in the streets, which were lighted up, after darkness fell, by the flames roaring from the Church of St. Michael, which was burned to the ground. A great deal of damage was done, but fortunately the ships were so close to the shore that their shot passed over the housetops, otherwise the whole of Antwerp might have been destroyed. The spire of the Cathedral was a conspicuous object, rising high above the Place Verte in the most crowded part of the town. The shells flew past it and over it, but only three did any harm, one bringing down a turret, and two crashing through the roof and bursting in the nave.

The wind carried the sound of the cannonade to Brussels, where, after sunset, the people saw the sky glowing red in the east ; and some members of the Revolutionary Government were sent to Antwerp, who arranged an armistice. The Dutch remained

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THE roadstead from the Tête de Flandre.



in possession of the citadel; but this bombardment, which took place on October 27, 1830, put an end to the last lingering hopes of a reconciliation between the Belgian provinces and the House of Orange-Nassau.

Since 1830 the trade of Antwerp has increased enormously, and not very long ago the Scheldt was so congested with shipping that no vessels were allowed up unless they were regular liners, as there were no free berths in the docks. This fact speaks for itself. Antwerp is now the greatest port on the continent of Europe. In the world London stands first, with New York second, but Antwerp comes third; and to meet this huge trade three miles of additional quays are to be constructed within the next few years. Last year the Burgomaster of the city said that the mercantile marine of Great Britain was so pre-eminent there that Antwerp was, 'from a commercial point of view, one of the most important British ports in the world.' Germany and England, however, are engaged in a struggle for supremacy. They are ahead of all rivals; but the shipping companies of Hamburg and Bremen are the most powerful in the city, and, although during the last twenty years British trade has steadily increased at Antwerp, German trade

has increased still more, and seems to be rapidly overtaking that of England.

The presence in force of the German element on the banks of the Scheldt is the most striking feature of modern Antwerp. An extraordinary hold on its commerce and industries has been secured, as well as on the social life of the city. The Chamber of Commerce is full of German members. There is a German colony many thousands strong. There are German clubs and schools, and numberless clerks from all parts of Germany are to be found in business houses. These facts give some colour to the prediction, so often heard, that the time is approaching when Antwerp will be under the German Zollverein, and that this will be the first step towards the realization of those ambitions which, beginning with a commercial alliance with Holland and Belgium, are to find their victory in the absorption of those countries, or, at least, of Holland and Antwerp, in the German Empire. It is well known that the Netherlands believe their independence to be in danger. The Belgian Government purposes spending millions in extending the fortifications of Antwerp. On all hands the durability of the settlement made by the Conference of London in 1830-1831 is called in question.

Great interests are involved; and it is within the possibilities of the future that Antwerp may be, yet once again, the hinge on which the peace of Europe turns. The mouth of the Scheldt is still where it was in the days of Napoleon—opposite the mouth of the Thames.

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